Coming to Grips With Berkeley

Leonard Michaels

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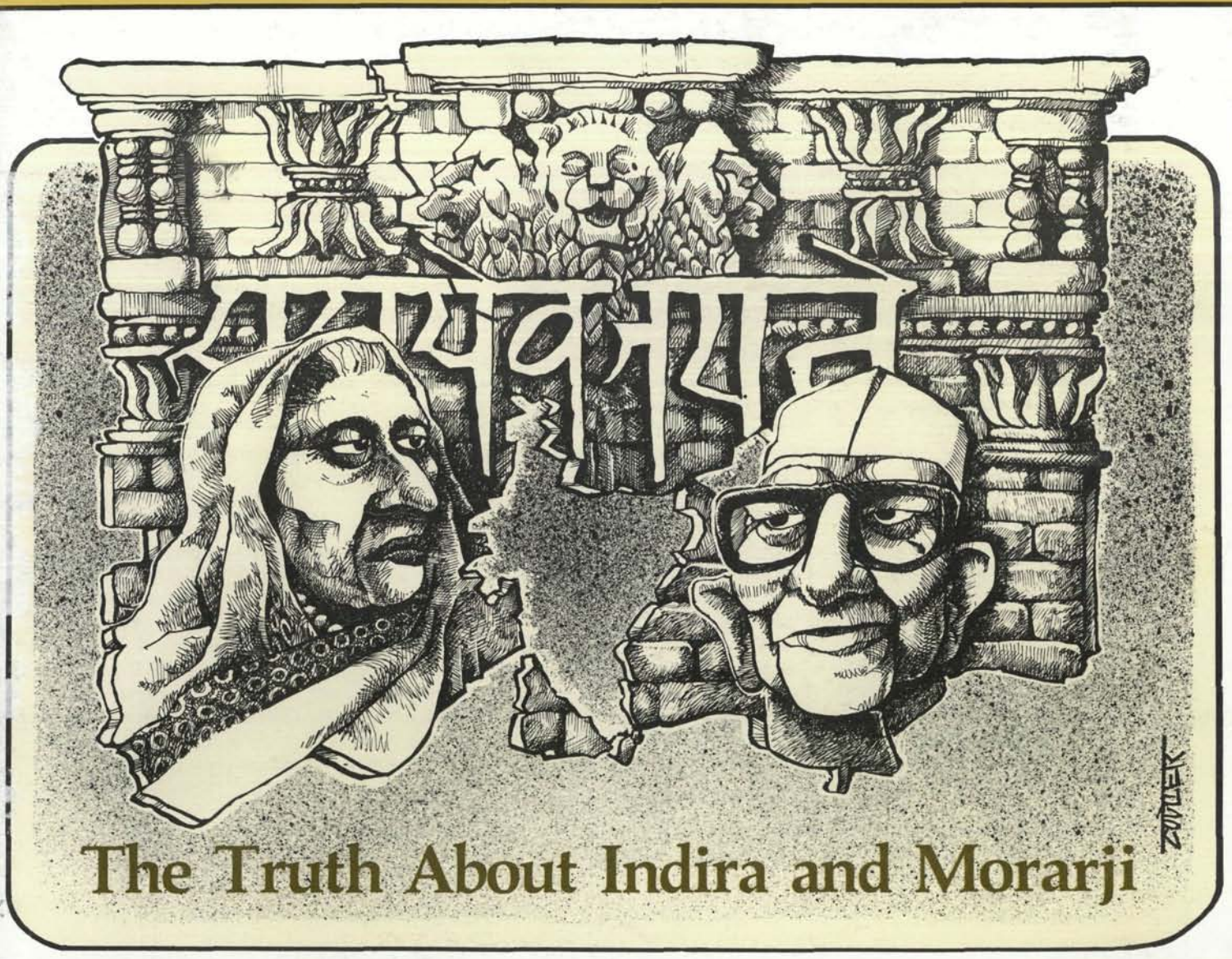

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TRB

from Washington
October 22, 1977

We Have Buried Them

Two Americans and an Englishman split the Nobel physics prize this year and Russians didn't place. Since 1901 there have been 38 Americans among the 109 winners and only 6 Russians.

A Belgian won the Nobel chemistry prize this year. There have been 89 physics winners since the start, including 21 Americans. But only one Russian.

Russians lag in technology and it affects their approach to world affairs. True, the Soviets put up the first Sputnik 20 years ago. But last week when they tried to mark the anniversary and to celebrate the 1917 October revolution, with a new feat, they failed; they couldn't make the link-up. It was the latest of a series of failures.

Lagging Soviet technology affects their industry, their agriculture, their relations with satellite countries, with the US and the world. They've got oil problems, too. What isn't generally realized is that Russia presently is the world's largest producer of oil (yes, larger than Saudi Arabia). It helps supply satellite countries. But its easy-to-get oil (west of the Urals) is now slowing down, and transportation from the wells in the east is vastly expensive. (Example: The Alaskan pipeline is only 800 miles long; the Soviets' 1976-1980 five year plan proposes 24,000 miles of oil and gas pipeline.) Unless massive infusions of investment and technology are poured in, Russia may well become an oil importer instead of exporter after 1985. That's just when prices of diminishing Middle Eastern oil will be zooming again.

Oil is only one of the Soviet Union's economic problems. It has a harsh climate and has begun importing grain from the US and Canada. (A current run of good weather, meteorologists think, isn't likely to last.) Another thing, the rate of growth of the labor force is slowing down and is expected to drop sharply in the 1980s. Who will run those new machines (if Russia gets them) or harvest those crops? One Russian worker in four is on a farm.

In sum, Soviet Russia badly needs Western technology. It's for sale. The huge Samotlor oil field east of the Urals is highly dependent on high-speed, high-capacity submersible pumps used in the water-flooding extraction process; where do they get them? Why, from the US of course; we are presently the only supplier.

But to buy goods abroad you need hard currency. Russia's technology is so far behind that the West won't buy its poorly constructed manufactures; its exports consist almost entirely of raw and semi-processed materials—a trade pattern unique among industrialized countries. It badly needs trade credits. And in Moscow itself the queues are lining up again to try to get quality goods.

The information I offer is set out coolly and dispassionately from CIA director Admiral Stansfield Turner as given to Congress. He testified in secret session and parts of it were later transcribed and published by the Joint Economic Committee. It was released during the Lance news blackout and got almost no attention. But the weakness at home may explain a number of things about recent Soviet policy, including a tendency to soften up their hard line. The choice between guns and butter is getting more difficult in the nuclear arms race.

Last week in the *New York Times* Bernard Gwertzman noted a paradox in foreign policy: Carter gets less support, not more, "when relations with the Soviet Union are smooth." Moscow shows some signs of cooperating on the Geneva Middle East conference and the SALT talks, and it alarms many in Washington—"it is easier to get a solid base of political support when the US is at odds with the Soviet Union than when the two countries agree."

A nation needs somebody to fear and hate. In Moscow it amounts to paranoia; Stalin signed a hypocritical pact with Hitler and then Hitler treacherously attacked in 1941; the Russians have been suspicious of everybody ever since. Now they have a growing problem; their economy promises a widening gap with the West and makes their defense posture more expensive and painful, but to modernize it would antagonize powerful political and bureaucratic forces.

(continued on page 38)

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

October 22, 1977

Administration Under Seige

It's difficult to know just when the low point was reached. At the end of the needlessly prolonged imbroglio over Bert Lance? With the middle-of-the-night, two-steps-forward, one-step-back Middle East diplomacy involving both the President and Secretary of State? Or was it when Vice President Mondale took the chair in the Senate to preside over the dismantling of a filibuster conducted by allies of the administration on natural gas deregulation, thereby assuring that nothing resembling a Carter energy bill ever will emerge from that chamber. No matter which symbolic occasion you pick, the conclusion is inescapable: at just about the time a new administration should begin hitting its stride, Jimmy Carter's is slumping badly.

Some have sought to blame a fractious Congress for Carter's problems. Others blame an overzealous, hypercritical press. In fact, most of his difficulties are of his own making. Jimmy Carter has not governed in the methodical, disciplined style he projected when he sought the office. The Carter legislative programs amount to unrestrained activism, grounded in no ideology beyond the 111-page loose-leaf book of campaign promises distilled *ex post facto* by his White House staff. Sort out some of its elements and the President appears to be a mainstream Democrat, a man determined to put the finishing touches on Lyndon Johnson's Great Society. Sort out a different set of Carter programs and he seems inclined to use budget balancing and bureaucratic reorganization to usher in a period of consolidation. Buried under an indiscriminate avalanche of administration legislation sent down from the White House or over from the agencies, congressional leaders are making a reasonable demand: set some priorities, they say. In his perceptive book, *Promises to Keep,* analyzing Carter's first 100 days, *Los Angeles Times* correspondent Robert Shogan reports that the President's closest advisers were concerned about just this eventuality. He's inclined to attack on too many fronts at once. They were right. On nearly every front—energy, SALT II, election reform, the canal treaties, not to mention the upcoming welfare and tax reform packages—there is trouble.

Another problem of Mr. Carter's own making is his tendency to oversell his initiatives while overcommitting his prestige to their success. Take the Middle East for example. Why should a President barely three months in office commit himself to solving the most intractable diplomatic problem in the postwar world, then put it all on a timetable? Both the energy program and the Panama Canal treaties were kicked off with great flourishes of presidential commitment; both were certain also to engender strong political opposition, for which Carter was inadequately prepared. On energy, having lost the major battles over taxes and deregulation, the President now finds himself backed into a corner where even his threat of a veto seems unlikely to improve the bill that will eventually reach his desk. On Panama, with his oft-volunteered personal commitment to the treaties, the overblown, operetta-like ceremony of their signing and his high-blown pledge to take his case directly to the people if necessary, Carter has continually upped the stakes. All the while, skepticism about the treaties has grown both in the Senate and in public opinion. So, while doing little that has actually improved the chances for ratification, the President has needlessly inflated the costs of losing. Senator Frank Church, a ranking member of the Foreign Relations committee, believes that President Carter could be as badly damaged by Senate rejection of the canal pacts as was President Wilson by rejection of the Versailles Treaty after World War I.

As the damage assessments roll in, nearly all are overstated, especially the rush to judgment around Washington that Carter surely will be a one-term President. National polls do indicate, however, that Carter's support has eroded steadily and at a faster pace than that of any of his recent predecessors. Polls also show that decline is linked very specifically with his failure to accomplish much of anything. Since the election, Jimmy Carter has repeatedly attributed his successes, both as a candidate and as President, to what he views as the public perceiving him as "competent" to deal with foreign and domestic policies. Indeed, the self-portrait he provides is that of an apostle of order and

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efficiency. That simply doesn't square with more objective assessments of his performance in office. The costs of his recent failures must be levied against just that treasured portion of his own image. The impression of incompetence may also be the most important holdover of the President's hyperactive, scattershot beginnings.

More than anything, this administration under siege needs time to breathe, to regroup its forces, restore its confidence, reassess its priorities and make a fresh and surer start. There is time for that. With the approach of the mid-term elections, the White House should find Congress more receptive toward a clearer definition of priorities and any friendly overtures to break the legislative impasse. Many Democrats in Congress seem to feel now that they can maintain a posture independent of Jimmy Carter. This standoffish, go-it-alone attitude derives from the fact that in 1972, most congressional Democrats ran a few percentage points ahead of the national ticket. Those who subscribe to that notion misread their own prospects. Whether or not they wish it so, Jimmy Carter heads the Democratic ticket in 1978, and the condition of his administration will have enormous electoral consequences. At no time in the past generation has the responsibility to govern been so firmly lodged in the hands of one party, and rarely has a party ever faced the potential of losing so much. If the Carter administration cannot recover from its herky-jerky beginnings and if Jimmy Carter remains divided from the rank-and-file of his own party, both in Congress and around the country, well, the President might still work miracles. He could resurrect the Republican Party.

Testing Our Metal

The steel makers have been talking up the "import crisis" for years. At last they find a President who is willing to listen to them and even to intervene against foreign competition on a limited basis. On October 3 the Treasury Department ruled in favor of an American company in Oregon and against five Japanese steel companies, finding the Japanese guilty of "dumping" their product on the US market at prices below the cost of production. Predatory pricing like this is forbidden by international treaty. As a penalty, the Japanese may be asked to post bonds to cover the dumping duties, in an amount equal to their "unfair" discount—32 percent. The bonds, if required, will cost tens of millions of dollars and will stop the Japanese invasion in one small corner of the steel market.

The Oregon case is more noteworthy for what it suggests about the future than for its immediate impact. It demonstrates that Carter is prepared to back up the American companies individually if they file the correct papers and make their case in court. But this is all he will do to protect the American firms from being battered in a global price war. At least, this is all he has promised. The commitment, though less than what the companies seek, is important because several larger complaints are pending review by the Treasury now, including a massive one filed a month ago by US Steel, covering two-thirds of Japanese imports. Other complaints have been or will be filed against British, Italian and French companies. The Oregon decision put all of these companies on notice that they will have to play fair or suffer the consequences. Carter means to enforce the rules, and there is nothing wrong with that.

But the American steel companies aren't satisfied with that. Since August, nearly 20,000 workers have been laid off by US companies. Three major plants—one owned by Bethlehem Steel, one by Youngstown Steel and one by US Steel—have been closed or cut back. The companies are taking out ads in newspapers and magazines, à la Mobil Oil, to argue that "unfair competition" from abroad is the source of all their trouble. The have launched a major new campaign to raise legislative barriers against the foreign marauders. It's an old theme, woven of truth and exaggeration, offered as a scapegoat for all the industry's woes. We trust that President Carter will not be taken in. It is possible to agree with the companies that they are in a crisis without taking their advice on how they should be helped out of it.

The President convened a special meeting on steel at the White House last week to hear what the company executives, union leaders and their favorite congressmen think about the situation. The industry so far has been reluctant to specify a remedy. A spokesman at the Iron and Steel Institute in Washington, DC refused to list even the alternative actions that the industry might recommend to the President. But he did say last week that, "We've got to do something about imports—*something* . . . We have an immediate problem. Twenty thousand guys have been laid off in a period of about three months . . . something has to be done." That unspecified something the companies want, we suspect, consists of two steps. First, a temporary freeze or rollback on steel imports from abroad, accomplished either by legislation or by intergovernmental agreement. This would make possible step two: further increases in the price of domestic steel. No one has declared these goals. We find them implicit in the industry's complaints about the Carter White House. The Steel Institute spokesman who was so vague about the solution to the crisis was specific in his criticism of a report issued this month by the President's Council on Wage and Price Stability. He disputed the report's conclusion that import quotas would do no good for the industry, and he added that "in order for the industry to become more profitable, it will have to make money." That can only mean, "Fix it so we can raise prices."

The President has directed a high-level task force

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Correspondence

Law for the poor

To the editors:

The September 24 article on the Legal Services Corporation, ("The Rich Get Rich, and the Poor Get Lawyers") misses the essential point about civil legal assistance for the poor, and does a disservice to lawyers providing that assistance, to the private bar, and most of all to the poor.

If political liberty means anything, it must mean the right to use the law as well as the obligation to obey it. Legal services lawyers make that right a reality for poor people. They are civil law enforcement officers who help ensure that the entitlements provided by law are received by poor people. They are civil law defenders when a poor person is sued or receives an eviction notice. Their efforts aid in making the legal system work for all people, not just those who can afford a lawyer.

Only about 15 percent of the 1,250,000 matters handled last year by legal services programs around the country were litigated. But all of those problems involved real needs of real people. That is why organizations of poor people throughout the country—as well as scores of other groups—have strongly supported legal services for the poor.

Legal services lawyers are an extraordinary group of underpaid and overworked women and men who are dedicated to helping those who need their help. The organized bar has supported the program for precisely that reason. More *pro bono* help from private lawyers is needed, and fortunately that help seems to be coming.

Reforms are needed in the legal system, including reforms in the legal profession as one part of that system. More should be done to prevent disputes from arising, to resolve disputes outside of the courts, and to de-lawyer issues whenever possible.

Many of us in legal services have made specific proposals along these lines. If adopted, some of them will certainly reduce the need for legal assistance among poor people as well as others. But that need will never be eliminated, much as utopian theorists might wish otherwise.

Currently 16 million of our nation's 29 million poor live in areas of the country where either there are no legal services programs or access is only theoretical because of severely limited resources. More support for legal services is essential if "equal justice under law" is to become a reality.

Thomas Ehrlich
President
Legal Services Corporation
Washington, DC

To the editors:

Stephen Chapman's "The Rich Get Rich, and the Poor Get Lawyers" intends to attack the federal legal services program and the legal profession, but its net effect is to hurt the poor. Mr. Chapman is right that ideally, the poor should get jobs and money rather than legal or other services, but does he really think they would get more money if legal services were abolished—and then enough to hire lawyers? He is also right that legal services "gloss(es) over . . . the legal community's unattractive blemishes," but many government programs are set up to counteract the failings of private enterprise, and thereby gloss them over. Does he actually believe that lawyers would cut their fees, offer *pro bono* counsel to the poor, and reform themselves if there was no legal services program? Or, that if its adversary approach to social change were ended, the poor would be helped through the electoral system?

Legal services was and is the most effective program in the federal Skirmish on Poverty. It has helped many poor people obtain justice from landlords, shopkeepers, the welfare system and other private and public agencies that regularly exploit their powerlessness; some of its legal victories have even gotten the poor more money. Mr. Chapman seems ready to scrap the program for basic reform, but he fails to explain what the poor will do until the reform is implemented.

Herbert J. Gans
Columbia University

Dr. Fairlie's sins

To the editors:

Although less than an expert in theology, it is my understanding that sin is ultimately to be avoided because individual sinners are assured of damnation in the next life. Similarly, the avoidance or ritualized undoing of sin by confession or other atonement promises individual salvation in the next life. In "The Seven Deadly Sins," Dr. Fairlie hopelessly mixes metaphors to apply the term to society, which, after all, is not going to have a life after death and will always fall short of a heaven on earth. It was this recognition, in part, that led to the enlightened 200 year-old decision to separate church and state.

Despite Dr. Fairlie's mixing of metaphors, I expect his series to be provocative reading, if he can avoid mirthless and moralistic arguments resurrecting liberal guilt.

Eric M. Plakun, MD
Cavendish, Vermont

To the editors:

Thank you for publishing Henry Fairlie's series on "The Seven Deadly Sins Today." This intelligent and thought-provoking series alone is worth the price of the year's subscription. I am looking forward to publication of the book.

Robert C. Sharp
Ridgeley, West Virginia

Big atrocities

To the editors:

I was delighted to see Stephen Kinzer's article "El Salvador" (*TNR*, Sept. 3). Big atrocities that take place in small countries are often overlooked, as has been the case in El Salvador for too long. The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee has worked actively with progressive groups in El Salvador for several years, and I have talked personally with eyewitnesses to the violations of human rights which Kinzer reports. Our testimony to Donald Fraser's subcommittee on international organizations in July documented a wide assortment of political and civil crimes by that government against its citizens. What concerns us most is the way US economic and governmental policies tend to encourage and support oppressive elites there and throughout the Third World to the detriment of the poor majorities.

Richard S. Scobie
Executive Director
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
Boston, Massachusetts

(continued on page 38)

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headed by Undersecretary of the Treasury Anthony Solomon to come up with a "steel policy" in six to eight weeks, just as he set earlier committees to work on a welfare policy, a tax policy, an urban policy and a black unemployment policy. Carter himself seemed skeptical of the companies' claims, saying that many of their problems derive from the antiquity of their factories. He might also have mentioned the antiquity of their management. His remarks suggest that he sides with the free traders on his staff, the most outspoken of whom on this issue seem to be Barry Bosworth, director of the Wage and Price Council, and Charles Schultze, chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers. Carter undoubtedly would like to stick with the old policy of handling each import complaint individually on its merits. But he is being pressured to grant the steel interests a blanket protection against the foreign threat. Congress is stirring, too, and it won't be long before the legislative calendar is clogged with relief bills. Representative Charles Vanik, a Democrat from Ohio who has taken courageous positions in the past in favor of tax reform and against legislated favors for the oil industry, has wilted already under the steel blitz. His constituents demanded it. Vanik proposed on October 4 that Congress immediately give the steel companies a faster tax write-off of equipment depreciation, a "stretchout" of federal antipollution deadlines, more favorable tax treatment of antipollution expenses, speedier rulings on import complaints, relaxation of the antitrust laws and a limited license to create an international cartel. What more could a steel company want? Unlimited license, perhaps.

In order to resist these demands, Carter will have to come up with a plan of his own that preserves the rule of free trade but relieves the immediate crisis in the US. We see at least three general areas in which the administration might help the industry out of its crunch without caving in to its desire for higher prices. First, the government could give special aid to the workers laid off this year, not just providing substitute paychecks, but also training them for new jobs and helping them find and move to other jobs as they become available. Second, the process of ruling on "dumping" accusations against foreigners could be speeded up and the penalties imposed more swiftly and broadly. Finally, it may be possible to increase the tax breaks for new domestic investments in the steel business, particularly for outlays on pollution control devices, which make up a larger share of costs in the US than abroad.

Not much more than this should be done to rescue the companies from their crisis. The industry will change more quickly and become healthier in the future if it is allowed to meet the competition head on. It will not recover its vigor nearly as soon if the government tries to build a supportive superstructure of tariffs and quotas around the aging factories now in operation.

White House Watch

Zbiggy Zpeaks

The White House briefing for the press after a meeting on September 30 between Jimmy Carter and Edvard Kardelj, a co-President (under Tito) of Yugoslavia, was unusual in two respects. Jerrold Schecter, the associate press secretary assigned to the National Security Council, was allowed to handle the briefing for once, Press Secretary Jody Powell being back home in Georgia for a family wedding. And Zbigniew Brzezinski, the assistant for national security affairs, appeared at the inner door of the White House press room and stood there, listening to Schecter and smiling at the reporters.

Although Schecter said later that it wasn't planned that way, the reporters invited Brzezinski to take over the briefing and he did with evident zest. When he was asked what happened on his recent trip to Paris, London and Bonn, the first foreign journey he has made on his own since he took office, the normally cantankerous press corps let him get away with answering only, "It was very nice" and "I enjoyed it." In answer to other questions, Brzezinski then offered the best official explanations yet given for two aspects of Carter foreign policy and performance that require a lot of explaining. They are the President's human rights doctrine and the trip to eight countries on four continents that Carter has scheduled between November 22 and December 2. The human rights doctrine as explained by Brzezinski still casts Carter in the posture of a global busybody mired in the inconsistencies that unavoidably mark his toleration in some countries of practices that he denounces and penalizes in other countries. The trip to Venezuela, Brazil, Nigeria, India, Iran, France, Poland and Belgium in that order, in 11 days, seems as insanely plotted and crowded after Brzezinski's explanation as it did when announcement of it diverted attention from the resignation of budget director Bert Lance. Nevertheless, we now have from Brzezinski understandable rationales for the doctrine and the trip. Because the explanations were practically unnoticed at the time, they are quoted with a minimum of reportorial intervention and skepticism.

A question aimed mainly at human rights—why was the President "honoring Brazil and Iran with state visits in view of their record on human rights?"—set Brzezinski off on his justification of the trip as such. In part and condensed, his reply follows:

"Because we are trying really to respond to some very fundamental changes that are taking place in the world. If you look at what happened in the last 20 or 30 years, one of the most basic changes is the appearance of many

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new states on the world scene, the surfacing of new economic and political demands and the increasingly important roles of countries which previously haven't played such important roles. When you look at the world in that context, quite clearly Brazil and Iran and some others are very important. The President is really trying to say and show that our foreign policy, in addition with (*sic*) being concerned with traditional issues, is very much concerned with renovating the international system, with increasing the scope of international participation, with giving the emerging powers a positive and constructive role to play. Beyond that, there are a number of specific bilateral issues we want to talk with them about. With the Brazilians we have some concerns over the nuclear issue (which) we think the two Presidents can very usefully talk about. The Iranians, very important members of OPEC, play a major role in efforts to restructure the international economic order. In that sense, the trip is part of a systematic effort to identify the United States more directly with change in world affairs."

Brzezinski's history of the evolution of the trip contrasted oddly with Carter's insistence last May, during his visit to London for the economic and NATO summit conferences, that he didn't like foreign travel and was determined to stay at home through the rest of 1977. All of a sudden, November 2 popped up as the pivotal date in the President's travel planning. Brzezinski speaking: "It was somewhere back in March that the President said to me that after one year has passed from the date of the election he would like to go abroad and in going abroad symbolize the kind of foreign policy he wishes this country to adopt in relationship to the emerging global problems. After he indicated that desire, I began to give some thought as to how to structure this trip. Cy Vance and I talked about it quite a few times. We decided that a purely conventional trip, let's say just Western Europe, would not be responsive to these requirements. We are visiting these countries not only because of themselves but because they are representative either of certain problems, or certain aspirations, or certain kinds of things that need to be developed in the world."

Brzezinski said "we began to make contacts" with governments to be visited in late August and early September. Considering the political and logistical complexities of any Presidential trip abroad, "we" were astonishingly few and phenomenal secrecy was maintained. William Hyland, who until lately was the third-ranking member of the NSC staff (he has just resigned to help Henry Kissinger with one of his books), learned of the plans in late August, and then by accident, when he was acting NSC director during the absence of Brzezinski and his deputy, David Aaron. All of which would make it believable that the whole thing had been cooked up to distract the media from the Lance disaster if it were not certain that such a trip could not have been initiated after the resignation became likely in mid-September and been ready for announcement September 22.

Another question about Brazil and Iran pressed Brzezinski into acknowledging that human rights might "conceivably" be "one of the larger issues" for discussion in those countries. He then said: " . . . what we have tried to do in the human rights issue, and I think it is a point worth bearing in mind, is to confirm the American commitment to the notion that this is an idea whose time has come; that the strength of that idea and its specific political expression within individual countries really is very much dependent on the conditions within these countries. We are not making human rights the condition for dealing with governments. We see movement toward human rights as inherent in the present evolution of mankind, the rising demands, more literacy, more communications. All of that is producing many more demands for human rights and we want to encourage that. . . . But when we get to specific bilateral discussions of important bilateral issues, we obviously will not make it the precondition or the central issue of our bilateral relations."

Why is the issue "the centerpiece of our relations with South Africa" but not of our relations with Brazil and Iran? Here is Brzezinski's memorable answer, somewhat condensed: "I think in a way that is not only a difficult question but a very good one. You see in South Africa the connection between that fundamental moral issue and political change both within the country and externally. The increasing political and social consciousness of the black majority in South Africa is bringing that issue to the fore in terms of the very nature of South African society. And internationally, the conjunction between the aspiration for true equality and true opportunity on the part of the blacks and the black states, the conjunction of this with ideological conflicts, really is posing the challenge that the black-white conflict could simultaneously become a white-red conflict—if you will, a conjunction of racial war and ideological war. This is what transforms a moral issue into an immediate political issue; whereas in some other places, either domestically or internationally, that issue has not surfaced to some extent. One has to make one's judgment not only on the basis of what one would like to see in the world but also in terms of what is actually happening and where the most pressing issues are surfaced."

Note: Peter Peckarsky, a free-lance radio correspondent whose offensive questioning of Henry Kissinger was denounced in this space in 1974, drew the best of the foregoing answers from Brzezinski with excellent questions.

John Osborne

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Indira Isn't India Anymore.

Morarji in Charge

You can hardly tell it from the headlines, either here or in India itself, but there really are important things happening in India today other than the continuing legal and political adventures of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. The Janata government that succeeded her has restored most of the democratic liberties she suppressed during 21 months of emergency rule. The Janata (Peoples) party itself, an ideological hodge-podge united only by opposition to Mrs. Gandhi in the March elections, has managed to hold together as a governing coalition, though it has yet to become a mass-membership political party. Prime Minister Morarji Desai has been fashioning a truly non-aligned foreign policy, correcting Mrs. Gandhi's tilt toward Moscow. President Carter's visit to India next month will be a celebration of democracy's restoration and a certification that the United States regards India as a major force in solving the so-called "1980s issues" such as north-south economic relations, nutrition and nuclear proliferation. Desai says that an exchange of letters between himself and Carter has corrected some "misunderstandings" between countries. But he is still prickly and independent about accepting US nuclear policies. In fairness, he says, nuclear powers like the United States should get rid of their own weapons before telling the rest of the world not to develop them.

After six months in office, the Janata government is still trying to devise its solutions to India's enduring problems, such as the plight of 260 million people, 45 percent of the population, whose income is less than the official poverty level of six dollars a month. The government wants to double average per-capita income (currently $80 a year) over the next ten years. It wants to eliminate unemployment, which means finding jobs for 50 million people who are idle now, plus six million new workers coming into the labor market each year. Returning to the principles of Mohandas Gandhi, government leaders say that their intention—after 30 years of dedication on heavy industrialization, centralized authority and socialism—is to emphasize labor-intensive cottage industries, rural development and self-help in the 550,000 villages where 80 percent of India's people live.

Such a major change in direction ought to be the subject of national debate, especially among the disputatious Indians. But when Morarji Desai goes out on one of his 10-speeches-a-day tours around India, even when he speaks about agricultural policy, reporters ask him only about Indira Gandhi. Even in the weeks before her arrest on corruption charges, when government officials had virtually nothing new to say about investigations of her conduct, what little they did say made the headline news. Since her arrest and release, which government officials admit was a thoroughly ham-handed political operation, Indians talk about nothing except Indira.

It is little wonder. She is a thoroughly fascinating figure, a character fit for mythology. Daughter of independent India's towering founder-ruler, Nehru, and bearing the name of the world's symbol of the power of goodness, Indira Gandhi seems to have been born to lead. She has politics in every cell. She seeks power as though she and it were part of a natural process of coming-together. She shines and preens for power. She will connive for it, cheat for it, lie for it, be faithful or faithless for it. "She would kiss the feet of Satan for it," one Indian said. She split her father's Congress party in 1969 in order to rule it. She won election triumphantly in 1971 after the Indo-Pakistani war, then fired independent-minded advisers and began to act like the Empress of India, using all the powers of government to consolidate her personal authority and crush her enemies.

Her admirers liken her to the Bengali goddess Kali, who destroys evil to create good, but there is something more Greek than Indian about Mrs. Gandhi. She is a flawed goddess—over-reaching, prideful, obsessive. In power or out, she feels hounded by conspiring enemies. She used to say that the CIA was plotting against her and she claimed her foes, even the reformer Jayaprakash Narayan, were "reactionaries" out to block her from her goal of helping the poor. She claims that economic difficulties and spreading disorder led to her imposition of the emergency on June 25, 1975. But her timing and all other evidence suggest it was solely to prevent her from being expelled from office for election law violations.

More than 150,000 people were arrested during the emergency, including Morarji Desai, Jayaprakash Narayan and other elderly and distinguished persons who posed no threat to India's security, but only to

Coming Next Week

Meritocracy in the Civil Service

•

Melville Ulmer on
Black Unemployment

•

Eliot Marshall on
a Solution to the Health Care Dilemma

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Indira's. The press was censored even though most of it had been docile toward the government. Gandhi claims now that she knew nothing about torture committed during the emergency, nor of the forcible sterilizations perpetrated by the family planning program overseen by her son, Sanjay. She even denies now that her son helped to run the government, although during the emergency he acted and was treated as though he were Deputy Prime Minister and Crown Prince. It would be fitting in a Greek myth for mother-love and vanity to bring down a heroine. So it was with Mrs. Gandhi. She sought a mandate for her policies, and sycophantic advisers told her she would receive it with adulation. So she called the elections this March and she was trounced, mostly because of her son's excesses.

It was inevitable that Indira Gandhi would return to politics and the pursuit of power, and so she has. She will make use of any person or prop in the endeavor. She visited Jayaprakash Narayan to weep her apologies and beg for forgiveness. She rode an elephant to a rally to denounce atrocities committed against untouchables. When she was arrested on October 3, she demanded handcuffs. At her home in New Delhi, she will stand for a picture with any group that comes to visit. She will grant an interview to any passing reporter. It is substantially the same interview that she gives to every reporter, and the content of it is not believable. "I have never sought power for myself," she told me. "I did not count whether I would win or lose the election. . . . I lost because of the propaganda that was spread against me." She claimed that her opposition was "fanatical . . . extreme rightist . . . the kind of people who supported Hitler in Germany." She does not regret calling the emergency. She said she tried to do it legally. Perhaps too many people were arrested, but that was the fault of state officials, not her.

Would she impose an emergency again if she came to power? "I don't think it's a thing you can do twice," she says, but she will not rule it out. Does she hope to be Prime Minister again? "Not at this moment," she says, claiming a "sense of relief" at being free from the burdens of office. She has no plans at present to run for anything. "I do not view politics as office," she said. "I do not do anything to encourage people to come here, but if they come I have to listen. I have to follow up on what they are saying. I find I get involved in things. My goals are the same as they were when I was in office—to help the poor."

There is good reason to doubt, in fact, whether Gandhi's policies benefited the poor. Indian government figures show that there were 160 million more people under the poverty line in 1976 than when Gandhi came to power in 1966, and US government studies indicate that economic inequality increased. Her opponents charge that it was the poor who suffered most as a result of police, sterilization and slum-clearance abuses during the emergency. Mrs. Gandhi held inflation down to nothing during the first year of emergency rule, but it was up to 12 percent in the second year. She did force beggars and cattle off the streets, induce bureaucrats to show up for work on time, punish smugglers and—literally—make the trains run on time. But, it was at the cost of India's liberty, and when her subjects had an opportunity to judge her policies, they rejected them, massively.

Why did the Janata government lose its composure over Indira's recent attempts to return to political prominence? During the weeks before her arrest, top government officials were acting comfortable about her behavior, dismissing her as no threat. Morarji Desai told me he did not think the press's fascination with Indira detracted from his ability to do his job. "I do not see why the press should give attention to me only," he joked. "I want the press to be fair to everybody according to their own notions." As to a Gandhi political comeback, he said: "Isn't it her right? Where have I disputed her right if she wants to come back? Why should I say she should retire? Then, how am I democratic?" Industries Minister George Fernandes, a former labor leader who is one of the visionaries of the Janata government, said he could foresee "tremendous unrest" besetting the government if it does not get its development program moving in the next 18 months; but he did not envision Mrs. Gandhi leading a political challenge against Janata. "She's washed out," he said.

It appeared that the government would wait for an independent investigatory commission to finish exposing the abuses of the emergency period and thereby discredit Indira Gandhi, both publicly and within the Congress party. The party has been divided between her supporters, critics and neutrals who wish she and her son would disappear from public affairs. Instead, the government decided to press corruption charges, and its inept handling of Gandhi's arrest only served to advance her political cause.

Gross ineptitude does not seem to fit the style of the Janata government. It certainly does not fit the style of Morarji Desai, who has the reputation and countenance of an effective administrator and man of probity. Aspects of the Prime Minister's personality seem quaint even to Indians. He is a militant prohibitionist. At a recent reception, he refused a silk garland because a worm had been killed to make it. But in spite of his 81 years, he is nimble in body and wit. He has been a government servant and politician for sixty years, as a finance expert and chief minister in in Bombay, as Finance Minister under Nehru and as Deputy Prime Minister and as Finance Minister under Indira Gandhi until he broke with her in 1969. He has been Indira's political foe for more than a decade. Perhaps when the Prime Minister and his cabinet saw the possibility of getting Gandhi arrested on corruption charges, and when they recalled their own imprisonment during the emergency, they found the temptation

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too great to pass up. The charges were dropped by a magistrate owing to bad preparation of the case, but the government is likely to have another chance to prove its allegations and it presumably will not fumble again.

Morton Kondracke

Borders, I

Texas-Chihuahua

The quaintness and the cruelty of this border is that it so starkly divides poor and rich. No international frontier is more abrupt or brazen in matters of the human condition. From the El Paso heights, Ciudad Juarez seems to sprawl away unbroken to the south like some random dingy suburb. Yet across a hundred feet of the sluggish Rio Grande, beyond the shabby border markets and the boulevards of the middle class, babies die at twice the US rate, life expectancy is suddenly a decade shorter, and the per-capita income is barely a tenth of what the *Americanos* enjoy. For all its commercial civility, it is a boundary still slashed through the oldest and deepest divisions—historical accident, war, race, money, fear, and, not surprisingly because of all of these, some hate.

At first, it is true, the contrast seems softened by those thin but conspicuous public facades—European buses, coke, cheap synthetic clothing—that have come to mask abiding poverty, for victims as well as tourists, throughout the world. The sons and daughters of the peasantry have crowded into Mexico City and Guadalajara and Monterey and Juarez in the classic migration of the industrial age. Once there, however, they have remained an impoverished (though more presentable) mass, held in place by a tawdry but effective economic tyranny. And because of the constant throb of population growth, their leaving lifted nothing of the ancient pressure on the land. More Mexicans than ever before are struggling to live off the arid plains that rise gently from the Rio Grande valley. In the Mexico of 1977, the feudal peasantry seems less numerous only in comparison to an urban population swollen each year by hundreds of thousands of rural refugees.

For the *mestizo* majority, all this has been the savage price of having lost the 20th century's first and most fraudulent national revolution 60 years ago. The winners have done rather better. Wrapped in a revolutionary mythology approaching an official religion, its ranks moderately strengthened by a carefully controlled seepage from the vast natural wealth and robust growth rate of the country (an average of 6.5 percent annually over the last 20 years), the ruling oligarchy continues to run a feckless, occasionally conscience-stricken dictatorship. Its instrument is a slack Latin variation on Orwell, the Revolutionary Institutional Party. While PRI is nominally an alliance of workers and peasants, its power has effectively excluded both. What really governs Mexico is a handsomely profitable coalition of large business interests, government bureaucracy, the army command and the PRI officialdom. That coalition has produced the country's last 11 presidents, including the characteristically inept and pliant incumbent, Jose Lopez Portillo. Thus the vaunted "redistributions" of land that have shuffled millions of acres without affecting the root economic subjugation of the peasantry, and the meager spillover of the Mexican "economic miracle" of the '60s and '70s among the nation's 60 million people.

Not much of this is readily seen along the border, though the reality sometimes intrudes on the station wagons full of American shoppers. Small, indigo-haired Indian women and their filthy, ulcerated children—representatives of the Republic's lowest underclass—still beg only blocks from the bridges to El Paso. Seemingly unread Marxist slogans are freshly scribbled on the pocked walls of side streets. The semi-official collectors of commercial graft and party kickbacks make their appointed rounds alongside the tourists in the shops of Juarez and Nogales. Even less visible to visitors (and perhaps to the sclerotic Mexican regime as well) are the slowly growing urban and rural guerrilla movements. The guerrillas gained fleeting international notoriety in 1973-74 with the kidnapping and, in one case, the murder of US and other foreign consular officials. In the provincial press on the American side as well as in the government-controlled Mexican media, the insurgents' mounting and costly raids on the *Federales* in recent months typically have gone almost entirely unreported.

The crisis on this border, however, will not come from these glacial political stirrings. The force and logic of the inevitable crisis lies in the malignant and inescapable economic decay no Mexican regime seems able to arrest, and which no revolutionaries can control. While a 20 percent inflation rate devours the popular crumbs of Mexico's prosperity, the population climbs at nearly four percent a year, with birth control still a luxury of the elite.

Beyond the misleading open spaces of Chihuahua and Sonora states, the alienated, disenfranchised people of Mexico are on their way to doubling in number early in the next century. Though the concussion of that explosion has been felt so far only on the bordering edges of the US economy, their furtive, desperate exodus north is already quietly uncontainable. For its part, the US government faces the problem with a weary resignation—from the irritable frontier officials who know what is coming to the highest levels of the Carter administration, which, like its predecessors, too obviously regards Mexico as a

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docile poor relation and an ambassadorial spoil.

The outcome seems inevitable. We shall have to arm and close this border much as we have sealed off similar borders deep within our own cities. We will be fortifying our frontier not against alien armies or ideologies, but to keep back the ignorance, the neglect, and the want which we always have found to make such a charming bargain south of the border.

Roger Morris

The making of a Californian.

A Berkeley Memoir

by Leonard Michaels

Soon after I came to Berkeley to begin graduate work in English, I got into a fight with a married couple in my apartment on Le Roy Street. I knew a little about them through friends. Barry Glock had a degree in geology, but wanted to be a sculptor. His wife, Marla, was a painter. We all came from New York. Marla and I were alumni of the same high school, Music and Art, but we hadn't met until just before the fight. City, school, friends—we had much in common. Nevertheless Barry trapped my head in a stranglehold and Marla dragged her fingernails down my face. The fight was about money.

Barry and I locked together, twisting, stumbling, and Marla leaped after my rigidified head, slashing at it. Her cries and curses awakened my roomate. He bounded into the livingroom in his pajamas. Tall, crew cut, blond kid from San Diego. Engineering student, he went to classes with a slide-rule dangling from his belt. Mechanical pencils sprouted from his shirt pocket like asparagus tips. He'd never before witnessed critical intercourse among east coast intelligentsia. His name was Ted Gidding.

Instead of studying the scene—thus enlarging his soul—Ted phoned the cops. They arrived quickly. The fight was over. My face carried a spray of bleeding rips, the record of Marla's fingernails. I could have put her out of action by kicking her, but this was 1958. I was sentimental and sexist. I saw her as a woman. Today I'd see a woman-person. I could kick. Anyhow I say as much.

The cops were young men. Marla, small and pretty, made herself smaller. She did it with her voice, simpering how I owed her and Barry 35 dollars, their cleaning deposit on the apartment. Immediately I protested, shouting through the red rags of my face: "The landlord said don't give them money. The landlord—not I—must return their deposit. But only after they fix the holes they made in every wall while living here before me."

The cops said take our disagreement to court. If we fought anymore they'd feel obliged to arrest us. They spoke in the polite manner for which Berkeley cops were famous. Marla's fingernails, I noticed, were mooned in my blood. Her eyes were hot and exquisite. "Come, let's go," she said. Barry and the cops followed her out. Two days after the fight she and Barry returned, spackled the holes, and the landlord gave them 35 dollars. It could have been that simple. But she needed the fight and, months later, still needed to talk about it, telling our friends what she'd done to me, always saying, "It feels good to mutilate the face of a fairy."

That they wanted to steal my money—fellow New Yorker and Music-and-Arter, not to mention Jew—was depressing. More depressing they wanted to kill me because I wouldn't let them steal it. When the cops were gone, I didn't forget the incident and go to sleep. Psycho-moral problems demanded solution. I'd have talked until dawn. Ted looked uncomfortable standing barefoot in pajamas. It wasn't easy to ignore the horrible condition of my face. Still, I talked and talked, trying to stir blond California into blackest analysis.

"Tell me if I'm wrong. Barry, influenced by his wife, abandoned his geology. He wants to be a sculptor, an artist. Like her. But Barry Glock isn't Michelangelo. He looks at a rock, he sees the history of the earth, not the future of forms. In his heart he knows he must fail, make himself miserable, in rocks that once made him happy. See? A bitter man, he gets into fights. When old Barry is a total wretch, she'll divorce him. He'll pay alimony the rest of his life while he chisels his rocks."

Ted, rubbing his eyes, slumped and sighed. No words. No personal interpretation. Perhaps he con-

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Leonard Michaels is the author of *I Would Have Saved Them If I Could* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux).

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sidered Barry, Marla, and me bad people. Even so I wanted him to say a word. It might bear the odor of anti-Semitism. For a mean reason, I wanted to smell it. At last he said, "There was a question of money. I have to sleep. Early tomorrow I'm going sailing. Like to come?"

"No."

The invitation seemed insensitive. Besides, to me, a great body of water like San Francisco Bay was for sewage. Sailing was for tugboats. Ted said goodnight and went to sleep. I said goodnight and stayed up, analyzing the motives of people who go sailing. Could those sails, those tiny ghosts I'd noticed way out on the bay, represent cries against the Jews? I paced the livingroom floor with my scored, gory face; traumatized; thinking.

Next morning a telegram came from Ian Watt of the Berkeley English department. It said show up for an interview at one o'clock if I wanted to be considered for a job as a teaching assistant. I had no other income; I needed the job. First I needed a shave. About to shave, I saw my face. It looked like a voodoo mask. I remembered Marla's hooks tearing at my eyes and I had a vision: New York was tearing at my eyes. Why? Because I didn't want to live there anymore. I wanted to live in Berkeley where roses and blackberries grow in the streets, where light is Parisian, where Ted Gidding sleeps ten hours a night, doesn't like talk, and goes sailing year round; where the hills are luscious with live oaks and beautiful houses; where famous scholars, who refused jobs in the east, dash gaily from the library to cocktail parties chattering about Guggenheim Fellowships and ACLS awards; where on a hilltop commanding city and bay a legendary laboratory stands, defended by a cyclone fence and armed guards. Its lights burn ceaselessly. Icy brain. Inside, a throng of Nobel Laureates make bombs, whistle melodies from Beethoven's string quartets, and reminisce about undergraduate days at Heidelberg. It was a Berkeley morning, sweet, shining with universal love. Oh God, suddenly, I wanted to be of this place, this beauty, power, and happiness, but my face, my face . . .

In black sunglasses and a dark suit I arrived for the interview. I looked like a pimp from Vegas. Before Watt could appreciate me, I said, "I had a fight last night. This face doesn't count."

During the Second World War, Watt spent time in a Japanese concentration camp. He'd seen worse faces. More pertinent is that he was handsome, broad shouldered, tastefully dressed. Looking at him through black glasses, I had an impression of myself: ugly, creepy, frightened. Watt nodded, then asked, "With whom did you study before coming to Berkeley?" I named professors at NYU and the University of Michigan. His expression became cheerful and encouraging, yet faintly poisoned by pity. I knew I hadn't gotten the job. In fact I had. It paid for my rent and food during the next two years while I attended classes in English and Philosophy.

Thus, my introduction to Berkeley was grotesque and ironical. Had there been no fight my face would have been normal. I might not have gotten the job. Without the job I couldn't have stayed. Furthermore, if Watt hadn't suffered in a concentration camp, he might have given the job to another candidate, a cleaner type. All in all, then, because the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, I, who at the lucky moment was mutilated by a nasty bitch from the Bronx while her half-wit husband strangled me, got the job. Regarding my own life, I can be uncannily objective, but I must now surrender to a personal strain.

I remember a Philosophy seminar conducted by J. L. Austin and a seminar in English conducted by J. McNulty. In a vague way these professors looked alike, versions of the genetic genius that produced the Hollywood dancer, Fred Astaire. Bony, sharp, pale. A tension in their bodies at once brittle and languid. They seemed figures of needle precision. Austin had this quality along with tremendous intelligence. His prose, like the dancing of Astaire, is beautiful and made of steel. McNulty had the precision. He edited Harington's translation of *Orlando Furioso*. A day never passes when somebody, somewhere in the world, doesn't point to this fat book and say it contains not a single spelling error. From these similar, extremely different, professors, I gathered something exceedingly general about the University of California at Berkeley. Its spirit accommodates extremes. This was true in the '50s. It is still true.

During the '60s, some faculty stars accepted jobs in the east. But some have gratefully returned. The library isn't as good as it used to be. Football and fraternities are big again along with old styles of racism and drunken bonhomie. I've been told that, at four in the morning, you can hear fraternity men singing to the sorority house next door: "Oh, I'm happy to be a Beta/And I want to fuck a Theta." However, not everything about the university gives itself to the idiocy of fashion. The beloved campus dogs, for example, still wander where they like, even into lectures halls; as awesome learning fills the air, they belch, fart, and fornicate. The new governor of the state, in whom many saw hope because he studied classics at Berkeley, turns out not to be a friend. Therefore, like San Francisco Bay, hope shrinks a little year by year. But the demands of instinct, represented not only by dogs and fraternities, continue huge and undefeated. Though the air is murky with industrial toxins, more people go jogging everyday. You see bicyclists churning up the steepest hills and, despite university rules, you see them speeding across campus. My eight-year-old son, walking with me to my office, was hit by a bicycle doing about 40 miles per hour. Fortunately, the cyclist was flung over the handlebars and badly hurt. There is endless talk about the body—

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how to feel it deeply, feed it naturally, heal it impeccably, transcend it completely—and much talk about murder and rape. Population density in the Bay Area compares now to Calcutta's, and Berkeley's Telegraph Avenue, once very pleasant, is like the Hoogli's pestilential flux. Citizens tend more and more to vote for conservative politicians, but there are mansions in the hills—with luxurious cars and glorious gardens—that are bastions of invincible revolutionary sentiment. A friend's daughter, packing to leave for Barnard, included among fifteen lovely leather suitcases a 24 inch color TV and her giant-poster collection of Mao, Ho, Castro, Trotsky, Stalin, and The Rolling Stones. When I asked if she sometimes wondered about spiritual inconsistencies, her father answered, "Why don't you go back to your pit in New York?"

Her father, a professor of sociology, is one of my oldest friends. Though he makes me feel stupid, I love him. He helps me understand this place. Luxury isn't a 24 inch TV set. Luxury is always, finally, mental. Here, in Berkeley, as in exotic cooking, irreconcilables are sublimed into deliciousness. Out my window I see, after two years of drought, hills densely, ponderously green. My lemon tree bulges yellow buboes. Thus, the very earth—liable any moment to spill into the Pacific with beautiful houses and posters of Mao—renders a complex meaning. Of course Austin and McNulty taught here at the same time. This is Witty Land. In every lush corner the flower of genius springs among weeds of schmuck. Red, hideous rips rayed out from my sunglasses to my hairline and jaw, but Ian Watt gave me the job. This could not have happened at Ohio State.

In Austin's seminar I never took notes lest I miss a phrase or fail to savor his least inflection. He talked once about the difference between saying you did something "inadvertently" and saying you did it "by accident." It's been long since I heard this marvelous talk which exists now in essay form. I could check to see precisely what he meant, but I'm more interested in memory than in truth. I think he intended some connection with life, though he held us with dazzling discriminations that belong only to words. Still, I suspected he was saying something about life, where actions have consequences that are often irreversible and beyond qualification. To illuminate his discriminations between "inadvertently" and "by accident," he said to consider the example of a man who goes to shoot his donkey but shoots his neighbor's instead.

I saw the dead donkey and the frowning philosopher, shotgun smoking in his hands as he wonders whether he murdered the donkey "inadvertently" or "by accident." What follows? Something about very subtle, distinctly different, ideas entailed by the use of apparently similar words. This seemed immensely interesting; it seemed to me just as interesting that, beyond our institutionalized commitment to words, is no less than many more words. A friend, who had a degree in philosophy from Oxford, hearing me rave about this talk, said, "Do you know there is something at Oxford called Logic Lane? And do you know what a lane is? It is a path that doesn't *necessarily* go anywhere." Austin, who came from Oxford, then seemed to be saying that, in addition to our lovely luminous weather and beautiful campus, we needed a Logic Lane, and that even existentiallly opaque seriousness, like dead donkeys, can provide the keenest glee of mind. He was saying, perhaps inadvertently, Witty Land isn't witty enough.

Before he returned to Oxford, where he planned to pack his things and return to Berkeley, he lectured to a large audience on the history of English words. He said words stay in the language insofar as they mean something approximately like other words that sound approximately the same. (Examples might be "snot," "snicker," "snoop.") On the other hand, words that mean very different things, but sound the same, compete radically. Their fate is variously to vanish. As always he was brilliant, and this time also passionate, strongly reiterating his theme, waving his arm as he spoke, apparently a little drunk. From where I sat behind his desk—the room was too crowded for everyone to sit in front of him—I could see that he'd slipped partly from his chair and was lecturing on one knee as he made this obliquely personal, very powerful case for himself—the word 'Austin' soon to vanish from Oxford?—or was it for the naturalness and inevitability of conventional order, the way things are anyhow always? I don't know what he was saying. This is what I remember guessing. A thousand years from now, as scholars search for biographical information about Austin, they may be grateful for trivia such as this.

Compared to Austin's seminar, McNulty's was the dead donkey. He never said anything interesting, though his look always suggested, beneath his smooth pale face, knowledge lay packed into bone as neatly and tightly as his teeth. If any of us imagined we had something interesting to say, he crushed such presumption. A paper I wrote for him, full of graduate student enthusiasm, was returned with the comment that my misuse of the optative mood was evidence of moral decay. This hurt my feelings, but to be fair I confess he was right. In his seminar, I suffered moral decay. I'd tell myself McNulty is a lonely man, very sad, perhaps afraid of his students and colleagues, afraid they won't love him. But it was no use. He seemed to me stiff, dull, hateful. We were studying *The Faerie Queene*. I once liked the poem, but McNulty required that we learn to worship its sublimities by doing an ideal edition of several cantos. To impress us with the moral value of this excruciating requirement, he sneered a lot. We made mistakes. The chief mistake, week after week, was that we continued merely to be. His own being was justified by the beauty of his person. In some lights his

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head became a structure of antithetical knives, like a vorticist painting, and yet he walked the halls of the English department with an air of lyrical possession, as if he lived discreetly and sweetly in a wiggly secret twig pinched between his buttocks. He was overheard once saying to a colleague, "I have the gift of chastity." Austin and McNulty are now dead. Austin had cancer. McNulty, I suppose, had chastity.

In 1967 I began teaching at Berkeley and soon became less romantic about the place and able to see that the university, in its exceedingly complex character, is at once a formidable and fragile thing, and its mysteriously political essence is as far beyond my powers of understanding as are my colleagues. When I asked them for permission to tell some anecdote they told me, which might give realistic substance to this account, they said no. I promised to disguise the situations and people. They said no. I promised I wouldn't talk about the particulars of any sexual nexus between faculty and students, though it was an ancient topic, thoroughly described by Plato and known to the whole world. They said no. I swore I wouldn't ever repeat a word said at a tenure meeting where the fate of junior colleagues is determined after hours of life-embittering debate, and I would say only that you go home afterwards unable to eat or sleep or remember who the hell you are, you who spoke so long and sanctimoniously about somebody's scholarship or teaching record in the deliberations of that grim convention and—though it meant the scholar might soon have to begin thinking about life in Kansas City or Detroit—you never for a moment risked your own shingled nook in the Berkeley hills with its bay view and patio bright with fuschias and camelias and plum trees and all dazzled by hummingbirds, you, whoever you are, that one who schlepped down the halls, the long halls of the department, to a colleague's office the day after you publicly, furiously repudiated his judgment and you tell him, trembling, insanely confused, you've come to take back not one word but to say you want his friendship anyhow. You put out your hand. He takes it and smiles. You feel this is impossible. You've annihilated yourself. It must be time to get out, there must be another way to live. I said, "Look, I can't talk about the university without being personal. I'll talk about myself. Let me talk about you—in disguise." They said no.

The Seven Deadly Sins Today, VI

Gluttony or Gula

by Henry Fairlie

Watch a gluttonous man at his food. His napkin is tucked in his collar and spread across his paunch, announcing the seriousness of the business in which he is engaged. His bulging face and popping eyes are fixed on his plate. Only occasionally does he look up at his companions, with a glazed look of indifferent interest. His mouth has only one function, as an orifice into which to push his food. He is like a hog at its swill. He may ignore his companions, they cannot ignore him. Even if they can avert their eyes from the spectacle—the swamp in his mouth, where the tide ebbs and flows, the seepage from its corners—they are unable to block their ears to the noise. He sucks each spoonful of soup through his teeth as if it were the Sargasso Sea. He does not chew his meat, but champs and chomps, crunches and craunches. He crams, gorges, wolfs, and bolts. He might as well be alone. As with all the sins, Gluttony makes us solitary.

John Masefield placed the glutton with the idler and the fool, and said that the characteristic of all three was a "carelessness of life and beauty". Gluttony does not find any beauty in food. Its taste and color do not interest him. He does not care how it is arranged, and not even very much how it is cooked. Food can and sometimes ought to be an enchantment. It can please our eyes, before it pleases our taste. For none of this does the glutton care. If a dish that is as beautifully arranged as it has been beautifully cooked is brought to the table—perhaps with its sauce browned so delicately, as Virginia Woolf once described a succulent meal, that it is flecked like the side of a doe—the glutton does not exclaim that it almost seems a pity to spoil it. He wants only to get his hands on it; if he could have his own way, probably to get them into it. The ridge of grapes down the back of a sole veronqiue under the coverlet of dappled sauce mean as little to him as the subtle flavor of the shallots and the white wine in which the fish was cooked and from which the sauce

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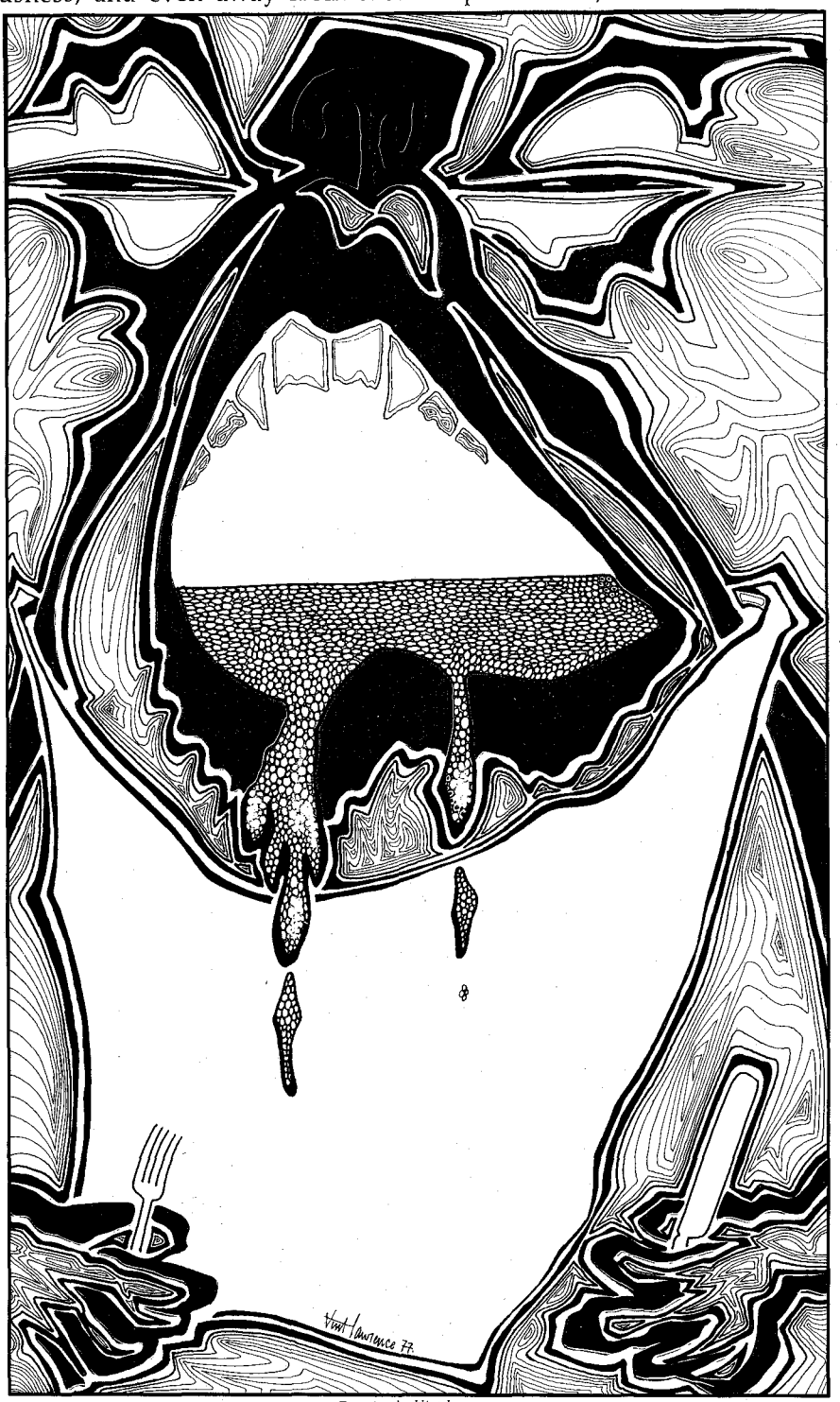
has been made. He might as well eat at a trough.

There is a sinfulness in allowing an appetite to make one so indifferent to beauty, to give no thought to delicacy and graciousness; and even away from the table, the glutton is usually still a boor, as unappreciative a painting or a piece of music, a poem or simply a jewel, as he is of his food. He would grunt if shown a Grecian urn. He has no sense of what is only itself and so is irreplaceable. Not even his food is precious to him. When we say that the glutton makes a pig of himself, we do not mean only that he has his trotters in his slop, but that the rarest delicacy can be set before him, and it will still be to him only slop. Gluttony does not give a particular value to anything it consumes. It does not savor; it only devours. Although the glutton eats voraciously, he does not eat even with gusto. One would never say of him that he has a healthy appetite. A disrespect for food is a disrespect for creation, for the goodness and bounty of it, for what has been provided to us in it to sustain us as part of it: not only as a part of it, but as the only species with some degree of mastery over it, and so with a special responsibility to it. None of this crosses the mind of the glutton. He does not respect his food, he is not even grateful for it. One cannot imagine him saying grace before a meal, which is a prayer of thankfulness for life, not merely for our food. But few of us now say grace. We take for granted, not merely a sufficiency of food, but a plenitude of it: what not so long ago, in the lifetime of many, was counted as blessing.



Drawing by Vint Lawrence

The amount and variety of foods which we now expect to find, at all times of the day and night, in our supermarkets and gourmet shops, restaurants and cafeterias, and even in our health food stores, is what would in the Old Testament have been called an abomination unto the Lord. We do not enjoy just an abundance of foods in our affluent societies, but a superabundance of them; what Shakespeare in *Coriolanus* calls "enough, with over-measure;" and the problem with this over-measure, as with all excess, is that it can enslave us. Here we now are, released from the preoccupation of wondering whether we will eat tomorrow, and from the monotony of diets that will not vary much from day to day for most of our lives, released even from the bondage of the peasant woman to her stock pot, and what do we do? We return to the slavery of the kitchen, now to make a fetish of it. We have become gluttonously interested in our food. We think, read, worry, talk about it. We expect it to be too foolproof a nourishment, of our spirits as well as our bodies, to enchant us too continuously. Our attitude is idolatrous. We have made of our food a golden calf. "We are what we eat", we used to say glibly, and now we seem actually to believe it. Food has become the miracle drug by which we set most store.

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This idolatry has its scripture. Forests must die to provide paper for the cookery books that spill endlessly from the publishing houses each year. The 1974-75 Supplement to *Books in Print* had 193 entries under Cookery; in the 1975-76 volume there were 208; and 197 followed in 1976-77. Even allowing for the reception of a few of the titles, the figures are hard to believe: for these are new books, published or announced in the years in question. Satiated by *The Eating Rich Cookbook* we may turn to *Staples, Delicacies & Curiosities from the Earth's Humble Kitchens*. Those who have exhausted the eating places in *The Underground Gourmet* can graduate to *The San Francisco Underground Gourmet*. There is *The Presbyterian Ladies Cookbook*, and the loftier *We Gather Together: A Cook Book of Menus & Dishes by the Wives of Bishops of the Episcopal Church*; and there is also the unabashed *Cooking with God*, a book of recipes from the Near East. When we have had our fill of *Love at First Bite*, we can move on to *The Art of Cooking with Love and Wheatgerm*. Whether or not our tables groan with food, our shelves groan with books about it. We cannot be too solemn about it all. But when we think of the generations that were content with a single book from Mrs. Beeton, our interest today in what we put into our stomachs seems excessive, even to the point of lunacy.

An invitation to dinner has, in many cases, become a hazard. What used to be a sociable occasion has been turned into a form of solitude. The hostess or host—for when they take up cooking as a fine art, men are the worst of offenders—will hardly be with their guests. They will be in the kitchen. But that is not all. The guests are hardly permitted to be with each other. As each course is brought to the table, it must be tasted, discussed, each ingredient told, the method of preparation recounted at length, praised, vaunted: almost literally *ad nauseam*. All other conversation is merely an entracte as the real drama unfolds with each dish. This is no less a form of solitude than that of the glutton. All companionship is destroyed. The guests might as well have stayed at home, and read *The Art of French Cooking*. In the department stores, the cooking ware used to be in the basement, a few necessary items of kitchen equipment, but now it spills over one of the main floors, taking up more and more room each year, ever more elaborately designed, and ever more expensive. These are the beautiful things with which we reverence the golden calf of our food, turning it into something which it is not, in order to worship it beyond its true value; and they also do not say grace.

We usually think of Gluttony as so unsightly and bloated that few of us today may seem to be guilty of it. On the one hand, there are the dieters and calorie counters; on the other, the addicts of health foods; and no one appears to be able to rise in the morning, and go out to meet the world, without stepping on the bathroom scales. These may seem to reflect a self-denying abstemiousness, but there is Gluttony in all of them. They make a fetish of eating, no less than the glutton. They are just as obsessed with their food as he, even if their attention is fixed on a raw carrot and a prune.

They are constantly going to their refrigerators, perhaps more than anyone else, counting what is there, making sure that not one item is missing of what has become so precious to them. They gaze on, even rearrange, and fondle the morsels, each in its sachel: all lovingly known and enumerated. From hour to hour, they return to make an inventory. When *in extremis*, they even count the spinach leaves. But at last the bell rings. It is mealtime and, salivating like Pavlov's dogs, they scurry to the kitchen table with a stick of celery, a radish, and a spoonful of cottage cheese, where a dried apricot has already been set out for desert.

They occupy the rest of their days by talking and reading about food. There must be some new regimen which they could be following, one more impurity that has been discovered in the chemical properties of the endive. Whether they are eating or not, their minds are on their food, and they are capable of talking endlessly about it. What is there to say about six segments of mandarin oranges on a bed of dandelion leaves, one may ask, but one should not underestimate their inventiveness. From so unpromising a beginning, an entire discourse will be developed on the relative dangers and benefits of cyanocobalamin, thiamine, panothenic acid, riboflavin, glucose, dextrose, dextroglucose, sucrose, galactose, melibiose, hemoglobin, lecithoprotein, cytoglobulin, and (for it must not be forgotten) phosphoaminolipide. There is neither time nor need to talk about anything else.

This is no less true of the addicts of health foods, as they exclaim at the wholesomeness of a sassafras nut, or hymn ecstatically the savor of a sunflower seed. A creaturely thing is magnified beyond its actual significance. One of the pleasures of food is that it offers occasions for social intercourse, but it is precisely this that is refused by the dieters and the addicts of health foods. Eating is their one staple of interest and conversation. In contrast to them and to the glutton, the gourmet thinks and talks very little about his food.

Our age is gluttonous also for drugs. "To use narcotics in small quantities and only occasionally is a venial sin if done without sufficient reason. . . . To use drugs in greater quantities so as to lose the use of one's reason is in itself a mortal sin; but for a good reason [as in the case of an operation] it is permissible". The widespread use of drugs in our societies, and the tolerance of them, is a form of Gluttony, and is condemned as such in theology, for the serious harm that they may do to one's health, and because they can deprive one of the use of one's reason. When every calculation has been made, and every apologia been offered, there is no way of denying that drugs, as they are now used in our societies, are damaging on both

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counts; and only a society that has grown listless about its members, about its own future, and about the continuance of the human endeavor, could be so idly acquiescent in their widespread and malignant abuse.

The young drug-takers in the 1960s had a point when they said that they had taken their first lessons from their parents' medicine cabinets. Pill-popping today is a part of the middle-class way of life, and before those who indulge in it proceed to a daily serial of "uppers" and "downers," they have already acquired the habit from the indiscriminate prescription of drugs for the most minor and even imaginary ailments. There is a level of pain which we ought to be able and willing to endure, if the only alleviation is the too ready use of drugs that either reduce our vitality or artifically stimulate it in such a way that it also leads to physical and nervous prostration. There are normally healthy people who deaden themselves with mere aspirin, rather than let a headache take its course, and whom one suspects of inducing headaches in themselves in order to take an aspirin. This is Gluttony, and it is wholly reasonable that, among the foods at our supermarkets, there should also be on sale an array of non-prescription drugs. We write our own Rx for the drugs we want, and pick them up with the Rice Krispies.

Of all the gluttons, perhaps the most evident is, and always has been, the habitual drunkard. The drunkard is condemned because he "deprives himself of the use of reason", and because he "makes himself resemble the irrational brute beast, destroying in himself the likeness to God". For the sin to be grievous the drunkenness must be habitual—to be inadvertently drunk only occasionally is not a mortal sin—and the loss of reason "should be total and continuous for some time".

We ought not to speak too easily of drunkenness, or of any of the other forms of Gluttony, as only or always a sickness or illness. There may be physical and even psychological conditions that make some people more liable than others to take drinks or drugs too heavily, or be more susceptible to them, but by far the greater part of the Gluttony amongst us is willful. The majority of gluttons, including the habitual drug-takers and drunkards, meet the definition of sin, that "there must be both advertence to the evil and free consent to it". We have today too many psychological explanations that destroy the very idea of our will, and it is one of the values of the concept of sin that it emphasizes, in the words of Henry Cardinal Manning, that there is "the knowledge of the intellect of what we are doing, [and] the consent of the will in doing it".

We have said that Gluttony is particularly the sin against the rest of created things. It is out of Gluttony, which is intent on consuming, more than out of Avarice, which is mainly interested in possessing, that we eat up the raw materials and natural resources of the earth. The glutton's contempt for the bountiful goodness of creation is reflected in the insatiable appetite with which we burn up "all things bright and beautiful". It is true that we now seem to be more alert to the consequences of our evil doing in this respect; but our essential depravity remains, encouraged and in fact provoked by our societies. We still wish to consume more and more luxuries as if they are necessities, each of which can be enjoyed in the end only by recklessly depleting the natural resources of our world.

What is more, we consume most, perhaps, simply by our wastefulness. We discard clothing before it is worn out. Our drawers are full of sweaters and shirts, our closets of suits and dresses, worn for a season and then forgotten. Of all the food that is set before us, in stores and restaurants, and which we buy for our own use at home, more than we can easily imagine goes into the trash can or down the garbage disposal. Because of the packaging that is used, it becomes more and more difficult to buy the exact amount or quantity that we want of anything. Butter comes to us in restaurants and cafeterias with a piece of cardboard beneath the slice, and a piece of paper on top of it. Sugar is not served to us in bowls, from which we can take exactly the amount we want, but in paper satchels. . . . After a family of four has had breakfast at a restaurant, the table is a litter of empty and half-empty containers of paper and plastic which, when multiplied several million times a day, amounts to a vicious waste of our natural resources.

All of this wastefulness is the sin of ingratitude, which is one of the consequences of Gluttony. It is too easy to dismiss Gluttony as a relatively harmless over-indulgence in whatever takes our fancy, but its origins and its effects are far more serious. When we think of the glutton, one of our strongest impressions is of his tedium. He does not just lapse into torpor at the end of his over-indulgence; his life is itself one of torpor from which the gluttonous eating is an escape. The atmosphere at a Roman banquet was one of boredom and of the attempt to escape from it; and the same is hardly less true of those whom we may see today dining extravagantly night after night.

The Gluttony of our own age—including the drug-takers with their "uppers" and "downers", and the inordinate interest of the dieters and the addicts of health foods in what they eat—has at least a part of its cause, perhaps even the main part, in the boredom of our societies. When there is so much for us to do, when so much is spread before us for our titillation, how can we be bored? Yet none of it satisfies. Gluttony is a sin because it induces us to find our contentment merely in the gratification of our appetites. But this is all that our societies offer us. They leave us with a hollow at our core, a sinking feeling in our spirits from day to day, and we resort to the devices of the glutton. We fill it; we stuff it. Even if it is only by chewing ravenously on a raw carrot, we have become a breed of junkies.

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Arts and Lives

Stanley Kauffmann on films

Trifling with Women

When François Truffaut has an idea, he makes a film. And, sometimes, when he doesn't have an idea, he makes a film anyway. The second group includes *Stolen Kisses, Bed and Board, Such a Gorgeous Kid Like Me,* and his latest, *The Man Who Loved Women* (Cinema 5).

Truffaut has a theme, compulsive womanizing, but he has nothing to say about it—in image or insight, in comedy or pathos or psychological analysis—that hasn't already been well revealed in every medium. I might as well acknowledge that I'm especially aware of this because I once wrote a novel on this theme (called *The Tightrope* in the US, *The Philanderer* in Britain) and am especially anxious for further enlightenment. None from Truffaut.

When he goes wrong in his films, he usually goes very wrong. *The Man* doesn't just miss: it has virtually nothing. Truffaut, who wrote the script with Michel Fermaud and Suzanne Schiffman, never decided to write a comedy, although there are many attempts at comic touches; never decided to write a serious psychological analysis, although there are many facile references to the demon who haunts a number of his films, a mother who is a bitch; and he never decides whether he is alternating between or combining the two. He just gropes as he goes along.

The fuzziness is heightened by that excellent actor, Charles Denner, in the leading role. Denner, whose performances in *Landru* and in *Life Upside Down* were among the acting gems of the '60s, has worked for Truffaut before *(The Bride Wore Black, Such a Gorgeous Kid Like Me)* and has worked very well. In many kinds of dramatic roles, in several kinds of eccentric comedy, he is as good as any film actor alive. But he's too intense for the light, quasi self-satiric touch that this role needs if it's to have any kind of success. For instance, when he deliberately rams his car into a pillar to give his insurance agent an excuse for tracking down a woman motorist he's after, Denner makes it seem almost psychotic, rather than daredevil hijinks. At the end he's hit by a car because he's watching a girl's legs while he's crossing the street. Lying in a hospital, with tubes feeding blood into him, he falls out of bed and kills himself because he's following a nurse's legs. If Jean-Pierre Cassel were playing the part, and Philippe de Broca directing, this might have been ironic comedy taken to its logical conclusion. With Denner and Truffaut, it's sickness; and I don't think that sickness was what either had clearly in mind.

And, as is often the case in Truffaut's weaker films, he pushes to the limit the French weakness for shallow profundities. A scene with a sage old urologist, played by Jean Dasté (the bridegroom in Vigo's *L'Atalante,* made in 1934); an accidental encounter with an old flame, played by Leslie Caron—these and other episodes are written with either gall or stupidity. Truffaut either doesn't care that they are howlingly banal or doesn't know it. And the banality affects the camerawork and editing. Nestor Almendros, a superb cinematographer, seems uninspired; Truffaut's always-lurking addiction to meaningless zooms comes to the surface; and the editing—in the Caron scene, for instance—is flip-flop tennis-court stuff far below Truffaut's best.

The story is mostly flashback, from and to Denner's funeral, and some of the narration is by one of the young women at the funeral, played by Brigitte Fossey, who was the little girl in René Clément's *Forbidden Games* (1951). By coincidence Fossey is in another just-released French film, *Femmes Fatales* (New Line), and by further coincidence *Femmes Fatales* is almost a thematic mirror-image of Truffaut's new picture. It's about two men who are tired of—nay, revolted by—women and who flee Paris to a village where they hide out together.

The two men are played by two of the leading actors in *Let Joy Reign Supreme,* Jean-Pierre Marielle and Jean Rochefort. The picture was made by Bertrand Blier whose *Going Places* (1974) successfully—and intentionally—abraded many. Blier had the same general aim here: he makes a violently anti-woman picture at a time when pro-woman ideas fill the air, and there's more than satire in his heart. A gynecologist tires of what he has to look at daily; a pimp tires of *his* point of sale. In their hideaway village they pal up with a priest—played by the director's father, the veteran Bernard Blier—and for a time are happy substituting the delights of food for everything else. For a time it's all viciously amusing. Then the script feels that it's running out of steam, and the steam that it boils up is increasingly ridiculous, tenuously fantastic, and ultimately unpalatable. What starts as nasty boldness ends as tired nastiness.

The chief trouble with *Bobby Deerfield* (Columbia) is that it violates Aristotle's First Law: *viz.*, Racing-Car Drivers Are *Not Interesting.* Racing itself, in small chunks and imaginatively done, can be viscerally exciting. But the drivers themselves are not therefore fascinating men, as a multitude of films prove. Even Broadway made this mistake last season with a play called *The Trip Back Down.* The assumption seems to be that, because drivers risk death for a living, they have something to say about life. Perhaps it's the fact that they have no special grip on life that makes them willing to risk it. In any event, no film

Films Worth Seeing

Julia. Lillian Hellman's memoir is too upholstered to be fully effective, but Vanessa Redgrave is glorious, Jason Robards fine, and Jane Fonda good.

Let Joy Reign Supreme. It very nearly does—ironically. By Bertrand Tavernier, who made *The Clockmaker.* The French court in 1720. Rich, intelligent, sexy, and generally subtle.

One Sings, The Other Doesn't. Two French women and the friendship that gives them strength to grow in their separate lives. The best film so far about New Women, warm with presence.

The Spy Who Loved Me. James Bond. For those in James Bondage, this is far from the worst.

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has really proved otherwise. And perhaps it's my sense of their trifling with the supreme gift that makes the death of racing drivers—and stunt pilots—so unmoving to me. So-and-so was smashed up at Le Mans, was he? Well, screw him. Why did he go there in the first place when he could have been doing something difficult that was useful—like driving a school bus?

Bobby Deerfield assumes otherwise and builds on two oppositions. A man who chooses to risk death falls in love with a woman who, against her will, is condemned to death—by an (unspecified) disease. A lower-middle-class urban American falls in love with a highbrow, sensitive, upper-class European. Out of these combined oppositions a good script might possibly have been written. But this script, by Alvin Sargent from a novel by Erich Maria Remarque, is besotted with dull or pretentious dialogue and with laborious attempts at oblique pathos, like a scene where He shows Her childhood photographs of Newark and this finally convinces her that he is "irresistible."

Much of the script is devoted to investigation of a fatal accident at the beginning. Bobby carefully studies a film of the crash. He seems to discover something. What? We're never told. The whole portentous plot strand is merely dropped.

Sydney Pollack's direction is flabby in its grasp and often grasps for the superfluously scenic—shots of Alpine reaches, a too obviously colorful balloon race. In one of Mark Twain's books, as I recall, he put descriptions of scenery in the back for those who like that sort of thing: Pollack strews scenery throughout.

Al Pacino plays Bobby. Pacino has unarguable fist-in-the-face power, but he can show it only in outburst or in threat of outburst. When he doesn't get the chance for these, as he doesn't here, and he just has to Be Magnetic, Pacino reminds me of Yul Brynner just Being Magnetic. All I can think of is the mirrors in which they rehearsed Magnetic Looks.

But, in the general rush of reviewers to toss this picture overboard, one lovely element has been missed: Marthe Keller's performance as the doomed young woman. She has been drubbed for her inability to pronounce the letter "r"; but Kay Fwancis did the same through a long career. Keller has also been knocked for her German accent in an Italian part—a jam from which she could have been saved by one line in the script (a German mother or something) as was done in *Black Sunday*. What's important is that, despite these defects and despite the cataclysmic lack of help from Pacino, Keller gives a quick mercurial performance of a desperately high-spirited young woman, impulsive out of impatience, irritatingly perceptive, tacitly frightened. It's the kind of imaginative acting that is pushed aside today by those impressed with the slangy jivey naturalistic performances that flood films and TV.

The Poems of Donald Davie

This is our ninth in a series of presentations of poets and essays on poets. Three of the following poems are from Donald Davie's new book, In the Stopping Train, *to be published this fall by Carcanet New Press, Manchester. They are: "Morning," "The Fountain of Arethusa," and "Seeing Her Leave." The other poems are from Davie's* Collected Poems, 1950-1970, *published in 1972 by Routledge & Kegan Paul, London. —R. F.*

Tunstall Forest

Stillness! Down the dripping ride,
  The firebreak avenue
Of Tunstall Forest, at the side
  Of which we sought for you,
You did not come. The soft rain dropped,
  And quiet indeed we found:
No cars but ours, and ours was stopped,
  Rainfall the only sound.

And quiet is a lovely essence;
  Silence is of the tomb,
Austere though happy; but the tense
  Stillness did not come,
The deer did not, although they fed
  Perhaps nearby that day,
The liquid eye and elegant head
  No more than a mile away.

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Seeing Her Leave

'gardens bare and Greek'
—Yvor Winters

This West! this ocean! The bare
Beaches, the stony creek
That no human affair
Has soiled . . . Yes, it is Greek,

What she saw as the plane
Lifted from San Jose.
Under the shadow of Wren
She walks her ward today;

Once more my tall young woman
Has nerved herself to abandon
This Greece for the Graeco-Roman
Peristyles of London,

Where the archaic, the heated,
Dishevelled and frantic Greek
Has been planed and bevelled, fitted
To the civic, the moralistic.

And that has been noble, I think,
In her and others. Such
Centuries, sweat, and ink
Spent to achieve that much!

Lloyds of London, some
Indemnity for our daughters!
Those who trust the dome
Of St. Paul's to the waters . . .

So much of the price is missed
In the tally of toil, ink, years;
Count, neo-classicist,
The choking back of tears.

Wide France

Sunlight so blurred with clouds we couldn't tell
Light from shade, driving to Vézelay
Disgusted you that Northern day. You thought
Caressing weather started at Calais,

And I had thought, in Burgundy; and still,
When we had stolen guiltily from where
Mummy lay wretched in the loud hotel,
All we found was squall-dashed street and square.

Nothing to do but go to Vézelay
That afternoon. Both worried, and the seasons
Wrong as usual, winter in our bones,
We drove the ten miles for the worst of reasons.

Let me remind you. First there was a strong
High, famous church; and where the hillside falls
Away behind it, France was spread at our feet;
And at our back old streets and gates and walls.

Poor eight-year-old, but how could you remember?
So many, before and since; and such a fuss
As we always made, as if to convince ourselves.
And now you worry about the eleven-plus.

Via Portello

'Nobody wants any more poems about . . . foreign cities.'
Mr. Kingsley Amis

Rococo compositions of decay,
Each a still-life, the fruity garbage-heaps
Teem by themselves. A broad and cobbled way,
Tiepolo's and Byron's thoroughfare
Lies grand and empty in its sullied air,
And watches while the rest of Padua sleeps.

The conscious vista closed at either end,
Here by a palace, that way by a gate
At night pure Piranesi . . . Yes, my friend,
I know you have decided cities and their art
Are the privileged classes' shorthand. You must wait;

Or, traversing the colonnaded mile
Of this decayed locality, extend
The warmth of your resentment to the style
Of Padua's poor. A civilisation broken
Around them, theirs; and want, and no word spoken—
The conscious vista closed at either end.

To Helen Keller

Yours was the original freak-out: Samuel Beckett's
mutilated prodigies, for whose
sake these last years we bought so many tickets
and read so many books, were hotter news
when your and Anne Sullivan Macy's iron will,
back in the 'twenties, stooped to vaudeville.

One will, two persons . . . yes, let campus-rebels
account for education at that level,
that give, that take. I wonder if it troubles
our modish masters of sardonic revel
that you, who seemed typecast for it, were not
conscious of Black Comedy in the plot.

You were by force of circumstance, by force
of your afflictions, I suppose, the most
literary person ever was.
No sight nor sound for you was more than a ghost;
and yet because you called each phantom's name,
tame to your paddock chords and colours came.

This too, at this, the mind of our time is appalled.
The Gutenberg era, the era of rhyme, is over.
It's an end to the word-smith now, an end to the Skald,
an end to the erudite, elated rover
threading a fiord of words. Four-letter expletives
are all of that ocean's plankton that still lives.

You, who had not foreseen it, you endured it:
a life that is stripped, stripped down to the naked,
asking what ground it has, what has ensured it.
Your answer was: the language, for whose sake it
seemed worthwhile in Tuscumbia, Alabama,
month after month to grope and croak and stammer.

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Agave in the West

I like the sidewalks of an American city,
Broad shadowed stone. I think of Agave,

Queen of the maenads, after incestuous fury
Shocked and quiescent, pleading for the cage:
Grids of a rectilinear plot, her cities.

Leaving the wilderness, she counts the loss
Of a world of signs—in algae, moss,
Guano, lichen, all the blooms of stone;
In cross-grained baulks and boles, in timber grown
Noble in groves or into monstrous shapes;
In rock-formations, cloud-formations, landscapes.
I like the sidewalks of an American city:

Sunstruck solitude of parking lots;
Taut vivid women, hair close-shaved from the armpit;
Glass walls run up, run out on the canyon's lip.
Barber my verses, pitiless vivid city.

Morning

Rose late: the jarring and whining
Of the parked cars under my windows, their batteries drained,
Somehow was spared. When I let out our schoolboy
Into the street, it was light: the place was alive and scented.

Spared, too, for the most part, the puzzling tremulousness
That afflicts me often, these mornings. (I think
Either I need, so early, the day's first drink or
This is what a sense of sin amounts to:
Aghast incredulity at the continued success
Of an impersonation, the front put on to the world,
The responsibilities . . .)
Let all that go:
Better things throng these nondescript, barged-through streets
(The sun! The February sun, so happily far and hazy . . .)
Than a mill of ideas.
Sin, I will say, comes awake
With all the other energies, even at last the spark
Leaps on the sluggard battery, and one should have
Prosopopoeia everywhere: Stout Labour
Gets up with his pipe in his mouth or lighting
The day's first *Gaulois-filtre*; then stout
Caffein like a fierce masseur
Rams him abreast the day; stout Sin
Is properly a-tremble; stout
Vociferous Electricity chokes and chokes,
Stumbles at last into coughings, and will soon
Come to the door with a telegram—'Operation
Some Day This Week'; and stout
Love gets up out of the rumpled sheets and goes singing
Under his breath to the supermarket, the classroom,
The briskly unhooded
Bureaucratic typewriter. See how
Sol winks upon its clever keys, and Flora
In a northern winter, far underground,
Feels herself sore at nubs and nipples.

And that mob of ideas? Don't knock them. The sick pell-mell
Goes by the handsome Olympian name of Reason.

The Hardness of Light

'Via Portello,' I wrote,
'The fruity garbage-heaps . . .'
As if someone had read my poems,
Padua eight years later
Is so hot no one sleeps.

But this is a different quarter,
Just off the *autostrada*,
Touched by that wand of transit,
Californian, hopeful . . .
I grow older, harder.

I wake in the night, to rain.
All the old stench released
On the risen night wind carries
Coolness across the city,
Streaming from west to east.

The equivocal breath of change,
In a clatter of sudden slats
Across the room, disturbs me
More than ever, in new
Motels and blocks of flats.

What is this abomination
When a long hot spell is breaking?
Sour smell of my own relief?
The rankness of cooling-off?
Rottenness of forsaking?

I glare. In that renowned
Hard light of burning skies
Nothing grows durable
With age. It neither solves
Nor even simplifies.

Time Passing, Beloved

Time passing, and the memories of love
Coming back to me, carissima, no more mockingly
Than ever before; time passing, unslackening,
Unhastening, steadily; and no more
Bitterly, beloved, the memories of love
Coming into the shore.

How will it end? Time passing and our passages of love
As ever, beloved, blind
As ever before; time binding, unbinding
About us; and yet to remember
Never less chastening, nor the flame of love
Less like an ember.

What will become of us? Time
Passing, beloved, and we in a sealed
Assurance unassailed
By memory. How can it end,
This siege of a shore that no misgivings have steeled,
No doubts defend?

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Among Artisans' House

High above Plymouth, not so high
But that the roof-tops seem to sweat
In the damp sea-mist, the damp sea-sky
Lowers on terraced houses, set
Like citadels, so blank and high;
Clothes-lines run to a handy cleat,
And plots are furiously neat.

There are not many notice this
Resourcefulness of citizens,
And few esteem it. But it is
An outcome of the civil sense,
Its small and mean utilities;
A civilization, in its way,
Its rudiments or its decay.

And if civility is gone,
As we assume it is, the moulds
Of commonwealth all broken down,
Then how explain that this still holds,
The strong though cramped and cramping tone
Of mutual respect, that cries
Out of these small civilities?

It could occur, perhaps, only here,
On these hills over Plymouth Sound,
Where continuity is clear
From Drake to now, where life is bound
Still, though obscurely, to the gear
Traditionally maritime,
And sanctioned by the use of time.

There is no moral to the scene,
Curious relic from the past.
What has and not what might have been
It serves to show now. And at last,
Shortly, nothing will be seen
By which historians may fix
The moral shape of politics.

The Fountain of Arethusa

'Arethusa arose
From her couch of snows
In the Akrokeraunian mountains . . '
More thrilling today
My mother's way
With Shelley, than his fountain's
Circus of grey
Mullet, or sway
Of papyrus fronds. Pulsations
Still rill it through:
What once she knew
Of crags, reverberations.
Couches of snows,
The nymph still knows,
Still pushing her little lever
Up and out,
As when it brought
Greeks once in a choleric fever
To Syracuse.
Mother, my Muse,
These are the springs that matter:
Small thrills sustain
The source, not vain
Glories or consonants' clatter
Down a moraine
In Shelley's brain
Or his ear. Yet I hear it! One day
In a parlour-game
Required to name
Mountains beginning with A,
Proudly, aged ten,
I pronounced it then:
The Akrokeraunian Mountains!
Grown-ups demurred;
But undeterred
Now as then I drink at those fountains!

The Poetry of Donald Davie

Donald Davie is 55 this year. Of the English and American poets closest to his age, Richard Wilbur and Howard Nemerov are a year and two years older respectively; while his countrymen and fellow "movement" poets first brought together in Robert Conquest's *New Lines* anthology (1956)—Philip Larkin and Kingsley Amis—were born, as was Davie, in 1922. Anthony Hecht, Louis Simpson, James Dickey and Denise Levertov are a year or so younger. Taken together it is not clear that the collocation tells us anything significant, except that all of them save Davie can be encountered by students and teachers reading around in the *Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry*. An oversight perhaps, yet he is distinguishable from these contemporaries in the further sense that (with no disrespect to the intimate knowledge of English poetry obviously possessed by a Larkin, an Amis, a Wilbur, a Hecht) Davie's knowledge of that poetry has declared itself publicly in numerous books, essays and reviews, on a range of poets from Isaac Watts and William Cowper to Ezra Pound and Ed Dorn. He is arguably, as Christopher Ricks asserted in reviewing Davie's recent book on Pound, the best post-Leavisian critic of poetry we possess.

Davie's eminence as a critic may work against rather than for his credible presence as a significant and valuable poet. It may also be that, again compared to the contemporaries named above, his poems are too learned and daunting in the historical, cultural and philosophical

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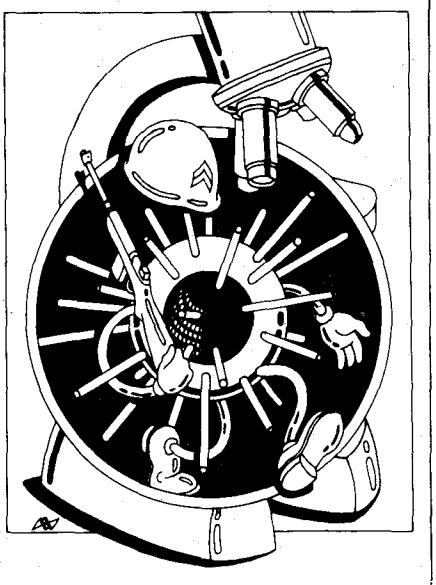
awarenesses they often demand and try to refine; or too private, allusive, thin-lipped and unforthcoming (Larkin is a good contrast here) in the self-explorations they undertake and presume to embody. I confess to having on occasion felt both objections, and will return to them later; but I also judge them to be the necessary sometime failures—occurring in the reader as well as the poet—against which the vigorous breadth of his success can be measured.

Let us recall at the outset how assured is the performance of an early Davie poem. "Among Artisans' Houses", the first one in his first book (*Brides of Reason*, 1955) is in both form and doctrine—and in words from its second stanza—"an outcome of the civil sense". The poem is written in praise of the civil sense, of civility, of civilization, as they are expressed in the artisans' houses of Plymouth; and Davie's own voice is similarly civil, conveying itself through the "strong though cramped" tone which English Movement verse of the 1950s found attractive or corrective. "There is no moral to the scene," says the poet, modestly; but really there is, and he becomes moralistic at the poem's conclusion since we have been warned earlier that not many people (except poets and instructed readers) notice or esteem such citizenly "resourcefulness", or can celebrate "its small and mean utilities" in an appropriate way. It is a scene which would not have warmed Dylan Thomas's poetic soul, nor presumably would it have Shelley's, nor will it readers' who—in the language of "Hypochondriac Logic", another poem from *Brides of Reason*—"in poetic worlds confide/The more their air is rarefied."

On the basis of the penultimate stanza of "Among Artisans' Houses", with its invocation of Plymouth Sound, Drake and the continuity of English history, it might have seemed that Davie was a bit of a Little Englander, that perhaps only there could "the moral shape of politics", at this late date in history, still be viewed. Such has certainly proved not to be the case, as became clear in the poems which followed, as well as from Davie's admiration for and affiliations with Pound and Pasternak. (It might also be guessed from the shape of his travels, his time spent in Italy and France, in Dublin and Cambridge, in Iowa, and in California where he now lives—though he has recently acquired a cottage in Devonshire, the better to keep up an America-England dialectic.) As early as his second volume of poems (*A Winter Talent*, 1957) one sees in "Via Portello", with its epigraph from Kingsley Amis, the effort to keep a vista open ("The conscious vista closed at either end" is repeated in the poem to excellent effect) by imagining Padua's poverty, juxtaposing the city's grand claims to learning and art ("Tiepolo's and Byron's thoroughfare") with the "fruity garbage-heaps" of its present decay. Davie's style of understanding and embarrassed acceptance of what he can't do anything about tries to balance feeling and intelligence, as in its near-concluding epithet: "A civilization broken/Around them, theirs; and want, and no word spoken—" Among other things, the poem is a firm if friendly separating of himself from Amis, Larkin, or from any too-amusing, cynical rejection of otherness (foreign cities) which throws out the baby along with the bathwater of "the privileged classes' shorthand". That way lurks the spectre of Mr. Podsnap.

"Via Portello" conducts itself in the style of a model 1950s poem, impeccably rhymed, smartly and pointedly paced. Within the tight form Davie creates many felicities, like the second stanza's third line's reflective musing ("At night pure Piranesi") broken off in ellipsis, then the voice pulling itself together to address Amis in principled opposition. Eight years later Davie wrote another Padua poem which begins reflexively with a reference to "Via Portello", quotes the phrase about garbage-heaps, then sardonically and flatly accounts for the present hot weather—"As if someone had read my poems." The later poem still has rhymes, though with a bit of contempt in one of them—"*autostrada*/harder"—and a less rhythmically seductive mode, even while its rhythm is both subtle and pronounced: "The equivocal breath of change,/In a clatter of sudden slats/Across the room, disturbs me/More than ever . . ." Like most books of poetry which appeared in the mid-'60s, *Events and Wisdoms*, in which "The Hardness of Light" appears, was touched by Robert Lowell's *Life Studies* of five years previous in 1959. But compared to Lowell, Davie's self-explorations, as in this poem, seem relatively little like performances; instead the man speaking here accuses himself, is disturbed by outer and inner weather, does not particularly enjoy being on stage. "I glare", he tells us, but deliberately provides few captivations or exhilarations in the language through which that glare is set forth.

This means of course that Davie's



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"confessional" poems are not likely to be as dramatically exciting or amusing as Lowell's (humorous self-display being one of the staples of *Life Studies*), let alone as lurid or hysterical as ones by post-*Life Studies* self-exposers. Instead we may have to be content—and I am usually so content—with the undrastic and unsensational domestic chronicler found in the first of two dedicatory poems to the *Events and Wisdoms* volume. "Wide France" suggests another side of Davie's appeal as a poet, one having little to do with ideas, much more with human relationships; which is to say no more than that the poem springs from a situation known to all travelers, especially seekers after architectural satisfactions while in the company of a small child. Davie's poem moves beautifully from the confused unease of arrival in a foreign town that turns somewhat wrong, with the mother sick or tired and the father trying hard to salvage the afternoon. "Winter in our bones", he and his eight-year old daughter drive to Vézelay "for the worst of reasons", the way momentarily desperate sightseers tend to do. Suddenly something is seen, as the poem raises itself into attentive utterance:

Let me remind you. First there was a strong
High, famous church; and where the hillside falls
Away behind it, France was spread at our feet;

In the last stanza the father apologizes for his hectoring, yet we feel it is right for him to have done it and made something out of the moment. As the conclusion has it, parents are always making "such a fuss" to convince themselves; but his human fuss is perhaps worth remembering, not just being superior to or apologetic about.

In his provocative *Thomas Hardy and British Poetry*, Davie says that under the twin, though antipodal, presences of Lowell and Allen Ginsberg poetry became confessional

with the predictable consequences—the poem has lost all its hard-won autonomy, its independence in its own right, and has once again become the vehicle by which the writer acts out before his public the agony or the discomfort (American poets go for agony, British ones for discomfort) of being a writer, or of being alive in the twentieth century.

Yet he reminds himself that in the most important sense his subject, Thomas Hardy, was a "thoroughly confessional poet" who wrote at his best when he was able to "coerce the painfully jangled nerves of the confessional poem into some sort of 'repose'". From the beginning, but increasingly with *Events and Wisdoms* and its successor, *Essex Poems* (1969), Davie's own poetry has attempted to charm or coerce discomforts into some sort of "repose"—the quotation marks reveal, properly, his nervousness about using such a Wordsworthianism almost two centuries later. Like Hardy, and like Robert Frost—who insisted that poetry end in a "clarification of life . . . a momentary stay against confusion"—Davie wants his poems to come out somewhere, somewhere beyond the point at which they began. Yet he is aware also of the fatal possibilities of coming out somewhere too easily, too ruthlessly, too artily.

The final stanza of "July, 1964", a poem which begins with the "smell of death" and the recent death of Theodore Roethke, moves on to consider what it means to "practice" art, then ends like this:

The practise of an art
is to convert all terms
into the terms of art.
By the end of the third stanza
death is a smell no longer;
it is a problem of style.
A man who ought to know me
wrote in a review
my emotional life was meagre.

More recently the title poem (a longish poem in a number of sections) of his volume to be published this fall by Carcanet New Press (Manchester, UK) has these sardonic shafts directed at a man, a poet who finds himself journeying through England on a slow train ("In the Stopping Train"):

Jonquil is a sweet word.
Is it a flowering bush?
Let him helplessly wonder
for hours if perhaps he's seen it

Has it a white and yellow
flower, the jonquil? Has it
a perfume? Oh his art could
always pretend it had.

He never needed to see,
not with his art to help him.
He never needed to use his
nose, except for language.

And this poet's destined future is presented as "a slow/and stopping train through places/whose names used to have virtue." Davie's ironic and searching criticism of the practice of "art" is an important instrument by which to measure his development as a poet.

I am neglecting Davie's longer historical and satiric poems, nor do I propose to say anything about such matters as his poetic career in relation to Pound, Pasternak, and Hardy, perhaps his most significant modern influences. My concern has been rather with poems from the past 30 years which primarily exhibit the speaking voice at its task of weighing and judging how much it is appropriate to say, how strong are the claims which the imagination can make in words that issue in believable poems (the earlier mentioned "Hypochondriac Logic" admonishes Shelley—"Whose poems infect his readers too/Who, since they're vague suppose them true"). But the *Collected Poems* (1972) also contain many handsome instances of anonymous song, represented in this small selection by "Time Passing, Beloved" and "Tunstall Forest". And even these two musically affecting lyrics manage to make, more memorably because of their music, intelligent statements of feeling, distinctions with a difference. These songs might be considered to stand at one end of Davie's poetic spectrum; at the other would be an ingenious tour de force such as is represented here by "To Helen Keller", a poem (Davie tells us in a note) "commissioned by the Friends of the Library at the University of Southern California" and read at their annual dinner in 1969 by "Mr. Charlton Heston". The date and perhaps the occasion account for its justifiable guying of "campus rebels", called "our modish masters of sardonic revel"; but "To Helen Keller" is itself a sardonic revel in the possibilities of "the language" it salutes the heroine for mastering. The revel begins by refreshing that then-modish phrase "freak-out", and continues right down to the final outrageous rhyming of "Alabama" and "stammer". It may be a more forcefully willed poem than Davie's best ones, yet it is good to be made aware of how much organized violence upon language he can commit, to the end of an historically ambitious, also entertaining poem.

Sometimes the linguistic violence is insufficiently visible, the poet occupied instead with making tentative formulations that just never come to very much. For example, in *Essex Poems* (and in the group from *Collected Poems* titled

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"More Essex Poems") there are poems terse and troubled, even querulous and fussy in tone and mood, which after reading seem barely poems but closer to journal entries, bits from a notebook not quite worked into the fullness of art. One could guess that they are reflective of Davie's state of mind during those frustrating years in the academy—the ambitious program he led at the new University of Essex fell afoul of late-'60s anti-educational operations; but they frequently come across as mainly moody, with private depths hinted at but not deeply explored. Davie's penchant during these years for shorter lines, and sometimes for cultivated irregularity in their sequences, contributes to a rather dislocated atmosphere in some poems; though their presence certainly gives the lie to any easy talk about Davie as merely a belated, fastidious Augustan. *The Shire* (1974) is more playful, even leisured in its achieved intent to write a poem "on" each of England's counties, held together only by the alphabet and the musing poet's continuities of response. But although these poems are strong on topographic and cultural lore, and show a delicately allusive reticence, they are frequently—though not invariably—weak in public shareable meanings, speculations, jokes. (It may be that as an American I simply don't know enough to pick them up.) At any rate, *Essex Poems* and *The Shires*, along with certain other material toward the end of *Collected Poems*, seem to me vulnerable to objections made in terms such as I mentioned at the outset. Yet any truly interesting poet must insist upon being, here and there, objectionable; the defects of his virtues ought to remind us that he is not only extremely gifted but also limited and human.

Davie's most recent poems (from *In the Stopping Train*) are, if not exactly a surprise, a spur to the reflection that he has never written better. The poems continue largely to work the vein of his best poetry, exploring the embarrassments, pleasures and dissatisfactions of living, but with a humorous detachment that is extremely winning. The life is now that of a distinguished critic, teacher, married man, father of a daughter and two sons, rememberer of parents now dead, and Anglo-American poet—last but not least. The new poems printed here—"Seeing Her Leave", "Morning" and "The Fountain of Arethusa"—are notable for their moral openness, their refusal to strike too striking poses. Life's strangeness (the

Fascinating in his appeal. Frightening in his power and purpose...

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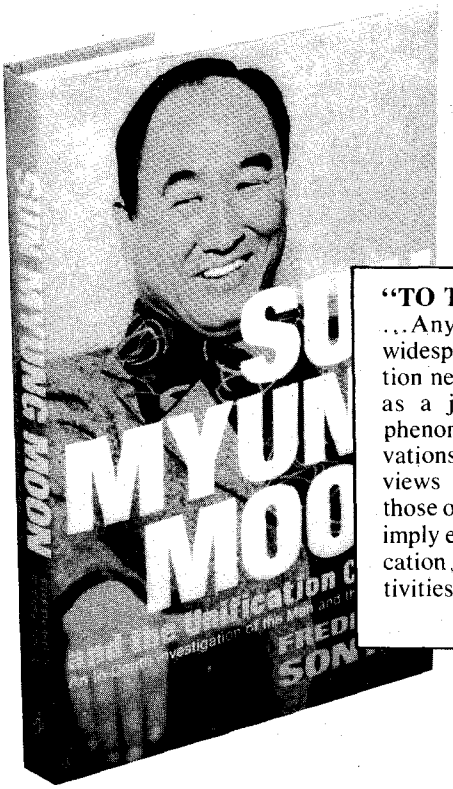

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banal word must do) and its incongruities rather are what bear thinking about: the poet as father, bidding his "tall young woman" (I presume his daughter) goodbye, sending her back to London with ambiguous feelings, counting—in the final stanza's terms—the price. Or as adult suddenly overtaken by a childhood memory of his "mother's way" of reading Shelley aloud and introducing him to "the Akrokeraunian mountains". Or, finally, the man himself (is it?) rising late in the morning and by artful steps assuming his "impersonation" of Donald Davie, poet-critic of reputation. As the voice in "Morning" announces, "One should have/Prosopopeia everywhere . . ." and this witty flourish suits with other moments of jauntiness and clowning which, along with self-accusations and lacerations make up these new poems.

My claim for the interest and satisfaction to be derived from Donald Davie's poems taken collectively issues in the following attempt at ranking—a procedure not to be regarded too solemnly. But of the poets mentioned at the beginning of this essay, his achievement is comparable to Larkin's and Wilbur's, although they seem to me to stand ahead of him. If he has not produced as many individually fine poems as either of them, and if his work as a whole is less suffused by a dominating single personality (though it could be argued that both Larkin and Wilbur, in their quite different ways, are *too* dominating, their poems always putting life in its place) he is on the basis of the new volume less locked into professionally capable forms, less a known quantity (even at 55) than either of them. Among other English and American poets, Tomlinson, Lowell, and Merrill seem to me to provide the good company in which he will be judged. But my purpose here has been served if some half-convinced, or skeptical but interested reader, will turn to *Collected Poems*, to *The Shires* and *In the Stopping Train*, inhabit for a while Davie's poetic world, then see whether the claims I make for it are accurate and just.

William H. Pritchard

William H. Pritchard teaches English literature at Amherst and has recently published a book of critical essays, *Seeing Through Everything* (Oxford).

Books Considered

The Ice Age
by Margaret Drabble

(Knopf; $8.95)

People read very little Boethius these days, if, indeed, they ever heard of him, and he would be the last person to be surprised that researchers into the field of Happiness now bypass *The Consolation of Philosophy* to settle instead on *I'm O.K., You're O.K.* Boethius, who was executed by the Ostrogoths on trumped up charges around 525, wrote his monumental work in prison, and it became one of the great source books to comfort troubled souls in the Middle Ages and early Renaissance when they asked themselves why nothing seemed to work out the way it should. In Boethius' complex, and occasionally self-contradictory system, divine Providence, which rules over all things, is immutable and eternal, but regulates lesser powers which change and alter the course of events so as to bring about the Providential end. The least of these powers is Chance, which delivers pain and happiness as if it were going by a random sample from the telephone directory. But it is on the image of the Wheel of Fortune, which he could hardly have invented, but which he certainly made popular, that Boethius slipped into Western thought, where, now and again, he still crops up.

He is there, for instance, on the last page of Margaret Drabble's superb new novel, *The Ice Age*. I mean actually there, in the form of a copy of *The Consolation* *The Consolation*'s being in the prison Keating, finds during his own unlikely imprisonment, in an unlikely landscape, charged with an unlikely crime, which, like the crime with which Boethius was charged, it scarcely matters whether or not he committed. The illogical motions which lead to his arrest, lead also to a much more engaging question than that of innocence or guilt: the question of whether or not it is possible to make sense of one's life.

Keating is imprisoned very late in the novel, almost outside its fiction, in a future projected by its author more as speculation than as plot. She jumps us into a different mode, a different perspective, from which the direction of the novel appears suddenly quite clear. It becomes apparent that the reason for *The Consolation*'s being in the prison library is that the entire novel is informed by the parallels drawn here between Keating and Boethius: their former success; their conviction for political ideas they in fact never held; their transcendent delight in birds and music; their search for meaning in the midst of events which defy it; their civilized presence in prisons run by barbarians, though in one case these are 20th century Slavs, and in the other, 6th century Ostrogoths.

That Keating, in fact, is a modern Boethius, points out that *The Ice Age* asks somewhat the same questions as *The Consolation of Philosophy*. They are very large and very ambitious questions about the death of empires and the nature of chance, about the logic and illogic of history, and the place of private enterprise and private happiness in a system which seems governed by the iron laws of chaos. This is certainly the most deeply serious of Drabble's novels, but since she is still writing fiction she is not required to find answers, and can put her questions into the mouths of her characters. "'Something has gone wrong,'" says one of them in a moment of splendid lunacy, "'With the laws of chance.'" While another, in a more Freudian mode of speculation upon illness, thinks, "There is no such thing as an accident." The question of why things happen, and why they happen to people who hardly deserve them, is constant in *The Ice Age*. Why the business failures, the random assassinations, the accidents of birth, which leave one child crippled, another addicted to heroin *in utero*, another merely unlovable? And why, beyond these and part of them, the decline and decay of England, whose privileged and decent past has gone by, and whose attempt to become American has dismally, but not ultimately, failed?

Nothing in *The Ice Age* is ultimate. And though Drabble presents without

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comment her characters' musings on the determination of their lives by family, by history, by chance, the very nature of the questions they ask themselves forms a mesh of skepticism through which answers tend to sift into an abiding doubt. "Is this it? Is what what?" the hero asks of his life. What changes can change back again; riches turn to poverty, poverty returns to solvency, and a revolution which succeeds would have proved rather more revolutionary had it failed. Though one by one the problems of the characters and of the societies in which they live seem to solve themselves, nothing much seems to improve. And the final note of the novel is that of total irresolution.

What there is of plot is one winter and spring in the life of Anthony Keating, who has just lost a fortune in real estate development, and bought a Yorkshire house which he can no longer afford. He has had a mild heart attack, and his rise and decline clearly trace the same pattern as the rise and decline of England in the '60s and '70s. He is waiting for his mistress, Alison, to return from a fictional Iron Curtain country, where she has gone to be with her daughter Jane, who hates her. Jane is in prison for killing two people in a car accident, while her younger sister, a victim of cerebral palsy, is in a boarding school for handicapped girls. A friend of Keating's is in prison for fraud, and another friend has been killed by an Irish bomb. Society's conviction of the half-guilty, and fate's random punishment of the entirely innocent are recurrent themes in the novel, and its characters cover the spectrum of English life, though the two central figures, Keating and Alison, are from the well-mannered, well-educated, well-documented middle class which has risen recently to occasionally brittle fairy tales. There was worth the effort.

From its rather elegant beginning, *The Ice Age* moves across England to scan the progress which covers the land: the grand hotel dining rooms, the new developments of concrete, the telly, the National Health; and then moves on into Eastern Europe to weigh that progress against another measure. The novel's movement is episodic; from Yorkshire manor house to moorland prison; from the bleak inhumanity of a highway made for cars, made to be lethal for living beings, to the hostile intimacy of a London club where a comedian does a one-night performance for all his old friends, and lashes out at them as if they comprehended the failure of all of England.

Drabble uses a constant interplay of contrasts. One of her central metaphors is the weather, the ultimate embodiment of chance, about which one can do nothing, which changes life without ceremony or logic and certainly without a weighing of just desserts. But a howling gale which terrifies some people, makes others exuberant. The old England of pubs and rookeries is juxtaposed against a new England of cement and television. People smother in private freedom and private enterprise, and drown in the liberty of making wrong choices or making no choice at all. But, by contrast, they are stifled equally by the certainties of Balkan communism and by bondage to other restraints, locked both in real prisons and in the metaphorical prisons of sickness, isolation, sexual compulsion. The cathedral of Keating's childhood stands in his heart a great deal lower than the gasometer which is his first, most beloved purchase in real estate. Drabble's description of this is ironic, but she is without malice when she suggests the two structures are of equal value, and are equally symbolic of human aspirations and human credulity.

Occasionally, at least, the human beings of *The Ice Age* participate modestly in deciding their own fate. The creatures most unequivocally victims are dogs. Two are forgotten and left to die, one, half-flayed by traffic, walks down a road to nowhere, and one is shot by Keating himself. Since dogs have traditionally served in England as objects of rather sentimental veneration, they suggest here the indifference to which that veneration has come; and, by implication, the indifference which has replaced all our response to helplessness. At the same time they embody the misuse with which we have laid waste the natural world, and the abuse we level at our own animal nature.

But even against this somber portrait of the contemporary scene, there are bright instants of joy; the perfect meal remembered, an evening of total affection and total peace, a day of exhilaration undoing the damage done by a storm. The best of these bright moments is also the penultimate moment recorded in the book. Drabble has become a splendid stylist, and in *The Ice Age* her precision is perfect. She begins the novel with the image of a dead pheasant which falls on Keating's pond; she ends it with the image of a wild, rare, winter bird, which

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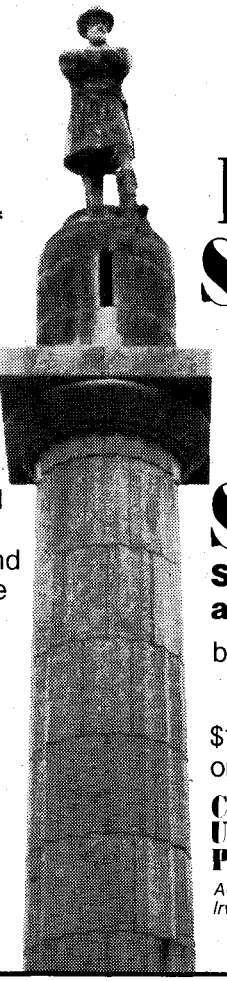

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visits Keating in his imprisonment. He is consumed with the sense of promise and life which it gives him: "I think these things because I am high on suffering, he tells himself, but nevertheless his heart rises, he experiences hope." As the pheasant, member of a "species artificially preserved," stands for all that is passing, for all of Keating's dying world, so the snow bird, "a secret beauty," stands for everything which will be there when that world is gone. Keating's delight when the bird appears is a moment of which Boethius would completely approve, an instant of grace amid the endless turbulence around it.

But before I seem to insist that Drabble is a neo-Boethian, whatever that is, let me hasten to say that she uses *The Consolation* for a much more serious and much more literary service than that of expatiating on its philosophy. I suppose St. Augustine was the great religious thinker of the Dark Ages; but Boethius was probably their only philosopher. He makes an appearance in *The Ice Age* to point out how like his time was to our own. For the novel shows a present where civilization is already dead, when it remains for us only to accept its passing. Old values are gone, the classics are no longer read, and there is dirt, graft and confusion throughout the land. It is the new Dark Ages which Drabble depicts; an old world dead, a new one still unborn. And the one philosopher of the old Dark Ages makes, therefore, a singular and tragic good sense.

Edith Milton

Edith Milton's most recent book is *Corridors* (Delacorte).

Carnival
by Isak Dinesen

(University of Chicago Press; $10)

I live in a small town in New Hampshire whose library's holdings can probably be called Standard American, Non-specialized. You will find little poetry there, a random smattering of serious non-fiction, many mysteries—and very nearly all of Isak Dinesen. It is, in fact, hard to think of another writer exactly comparable in stature as a popular figure whose work was (is?) actually read, not merely bought, by a broad and varied audience at the same time that it is respected and valued by sophisticated readers.

There are those who will demur and say that anyone who was a consistent Book of the Month Club selection in the sentimental '50s, who looked in her later years like *Vogue's* dearest dream of an aging literary character with good bones, a darker cross between Marianne Moore and Edith Sitwell, turbaned instead of tri-corned; who wrote tales intricate and accessible as Dickens's, only coolly, in a heroic mode, and about a higher class—anyone so popular, so loved, couldn't possibly deserve serious consideration. I come as a late convert to Dinesen myself; likewise to Grimm and Anderson and to the Arabian Nights whose tangible charms I resisted early along, the way a child is threatened by anything that has the look of childhood, of ease, on it, until the gates of adulthood clang indisputably shut.

The beguiling thing about Dinesen is that she was always more complex than such elitist judgments on her, and managed as few have to work without strain in the dual traditions of story teller and social commentator, of myth-maker and elegant, often snobbish, concocter of light entertainments. It was never a question, for Dinesen, of sugaring the pill, of lightening her dark side to win her readers' favor—her own life virtually shimmered with such contradictions: a yearning attraction to an aristocracy she grew up close to but not quite within (the title Baroness Blixen came with her marriage); striking independence and physical courage on the one hand and a distinct interest in the approval of men on the other. (Her first tales were written to amuse the man she loved; by the time he died she was a committed writer. She came into her long maturity alone.)

Though her *Ladies Home Journal* and *Saturday Evening Post* readers may not have known it, there was more than a touch of the lurid in her life. She was, one could say, the victim of two cruel jokes, her father a suicide when she was a child; her husband, in Africa, notoriously unfaithful, responsible for the venereal disease which seriously weakened her health for the rest of her life. (The details of the lives of these men seem to have been invented for her stories: her father had gone for a long time to live among the Indians in the United States; her husband was the twin of the man she loved. Under the surface of conventional social life she must have recognized deep springs of irrationality and impulse.) If the gaiety of the stories is forever shadowed, anchored as it is in the psychic life of a deeply scarred woman, cause and effect might also work the other way around: given the base realities of these intimate events, what relief in the contriving of distant, occasionally brittle fairy tales. There are no ministering fairies in those tales, of course—only the human motivations and powers of passionate seekers after the ideal: destined love, perfect fidelity, incomparable art. It is her belief in the absoluteness of personality that is borrowed from the fairy tale: humility and virtue are on a single gene, for example, and probably beauty as well, in the tradition of youngest princes and mute, bewitched servant girls. It is only that the cloth of gold of which the tales are spun is wrinkled at the corners by extraordinary psychological nuance. What seems always to begin as a simple music for her protagonists to sing ends unpredictably, complexly. Under her magisterial rhythms the melodies are often jagged and oblique. One would hesitate to say that her characters have neuroses like the rest of us, or that they can ever be taken entirely unawares by their lives. Rather, they seem to be working out different kinds of selfhood, pure and undeniable genetic destinies for which there are neither formulas nor casual revisions.

In her own life, Dinesen was impatient with the tempering forces that made socially acceptable women of the Victorian middle and upper classes—her flight to Africa was as extreme a chance as she could find to take, her form of pioneering—and the resolution of her characters, their adamantine quality, at least seems a brilliant personal solution (though Dinesen said of Freud "It is not necessary to dig out the roots to know they are there"). Who could better stand against the qualifications and hesitations of the drab conventional than, say, Madame Nat-og-dag in "The Deluge at Norderney," the very best of her stories (from *Seven Gothic Tales*) who, in the face of the far less exotic facts, maintained a "firm faith in a past of colossal licentiousness," believing

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herself to have been "the grand courtesan of her time, if not the great whore of the Revelation"?

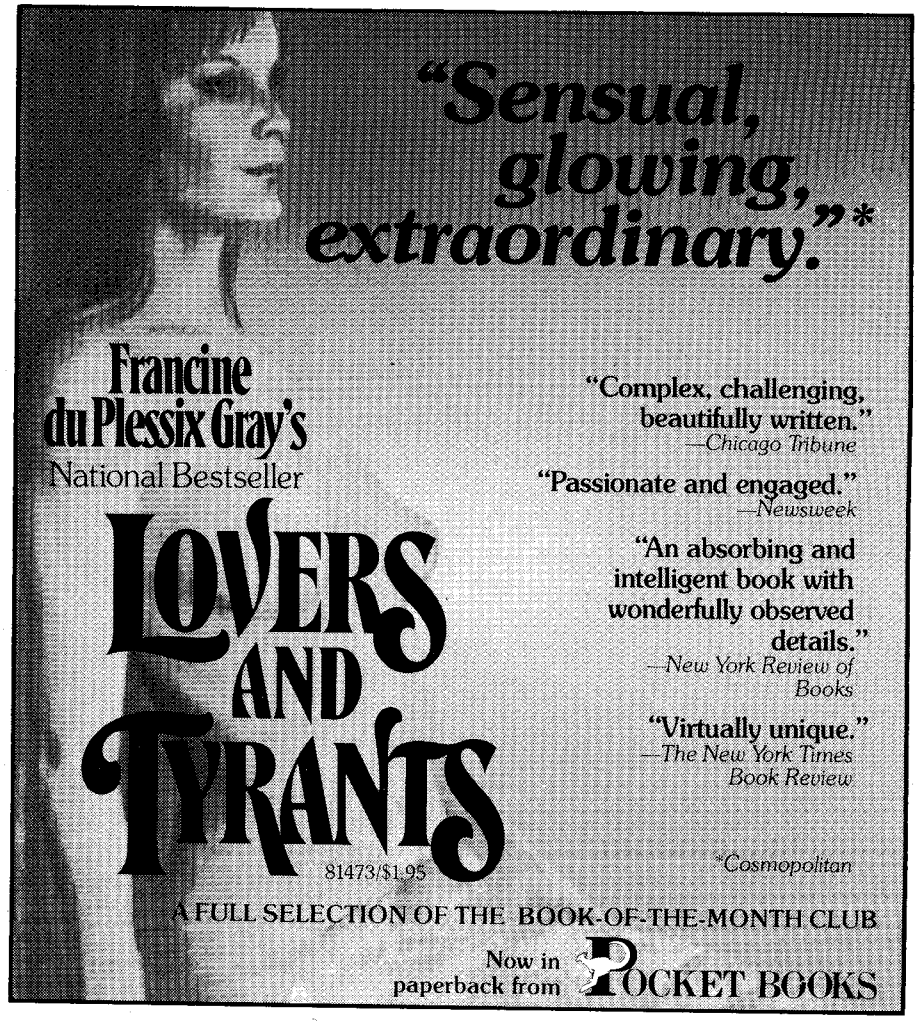
Carnival is a much more interesting and honest book than tends to be made of vagrant pieces 15 years after a popular author's death. It is not a set of "newly discovered masterpieces" the author saw fit not to publish while she had to feel responsibility for them. The fate of uncollected stories seems more mysterious than it sometimes is: for a variety of reasons these were not included in her well-known collections, in some cases because they failed to fit a theme, in others because they were not absolutely finished, though she had indicated a continuing interest in resolving them. The book is not skimpy, nor is its quality disappointing, though there is nothing in it that challenges the rank of her long-established classics. Since the stories represent many periods in her life there aren't many generalizations to be made (and just as well—Dinesen approved absolutes, not generalizations.)

"The De Cats Family," the opening tale, appears to be the earliest Dinesen published; with another, called "Uncle Theodore," they come from the time before she went to Africa, when she was dabbling in writing and studying art. Even in 1909, some of the hallmarks of her later work are here, authoritatively in place, however unrefined. The elements of the story are simple: the De Cats family of Amsterdam has always possessed one black sheep, a magnet for all the misfortunes that might otherwise infect the family at large. We discover the De Cats in disarray, terrified that their individual temptations are about to reclaim them because there happens at the moment to be no exorbitant sinner among them to draw off their bad blood. With good humor and a light hand for adding details of name and place as if they actually mattered, Dinesen describes the anxious search for the ram in the thicket. The subversion of a cousin fails miserably for a while (given money he only hires a French cook and buys a collection of flower bulbs!) but when he gets the point he steps forth to volunteer for the job and gets himself pensioned off into vice ever after. The De Cats subside into virtue and the land has a conscience once more.

All the apparatus of the Dinesen story is here, though the ironies aren't quite as open-ended as they are to become. But people operate as they must, they do not actually change, let alone cause each others' responses. The surprises occur only as discoveries because each fails to understand what he ought to have expected of the others; what the author (and the characters themselves) always knew. The book is alive with these absolute selves whose destinies slowly come clear not by complicating themselves, as if their futures were ropes tied into knots by circumstance, but rather the opposite: by simplifying like knots untied, the rope straightened and smoothed. What we learn about them is who they have always been.

There is a young woman in the title story, dressed as a Pierrot at a ball, masked and stylized out of reality, who envies a friend for not being in love because she knows she and her lover are "parallel lines" when she is desperate to "intersect." At the same carnival, the Magenta Domino muses about his adoration of virginity: "He had . . . felt himself like the troll of the fairy tale, so desperately devoted to little human children that he had to eat them up, and very sorry when he had done it, and there was nothing left." The entire title story, more talk than event, is one of Dinesen's curious blends of precise and painful psychological notation set in an arch and distant frame. (There are even short speeches in free verse, though mercifully few.)

In every story these elements draw together and separate: the intense individual, the family or personal fate against which there is no appeal. A grandmother "had grown perfectly bald, but she still possessed two proud black eyebrows, like a pair of scimitars, which she had managed to pass on to all her descendants." A deaf and dumb woman "moved almost without a sound . . . It was . . . like speaking to a stone, like being answered by a stone." There is a servant girl of a pride and innocence as unseduceable (however much she is, in fact, seduced) as Cinderella's. There is a sick child who will not get well until she is allowed to enter, "her face calm and rosy with happiness," the curious obsessive world of a dead friend. There is a dying bequest that allows a living actor to build his family monument—vanity unto posterity—upon the fortune of an old man of breathtaking corruption. "The Fat Man" is a short and nearly profound detective story that speculates on the nature of obsession (in this case child murder) and concludes that what separates the insane criminal from the rest of us is not wildly exaggerated behavior but its very op-



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posite, the absorption of all normal life into that vision: the object of the obsession is the only thing he sees: he is unastonished in its presence.

The language of these stories keeps its ceremonious regularity, the extraordinary elements given local habitations and names, shuffled, reshuffled. Perhaps a few lean more heavily on one-sentence explanatory endings than the most richly textured Dinesen. The book will not convert those who have a natural resistance to this comfortable and stylish form of eloquence in which there is no politics, no raw violence (though much that is implicit and threatening, and in the middle distance Death the familiar; understood). Almost everything ends neatly, or only a bit off balance to accommodate the pain of living, as so many of these characters do, by the dim light of their mispercieved destinies. But for those who persist in believing that the beginnings, middles and endings we demanded in our childhoods—before the anti-novel and the exhausted minimalist gesture threatened our belief in the honest hope for completeness—the only regrettable thing about this book is that it will probably be the last we'll have of Dinesen.

Rosellen Brown

Rosellen Brown's most recent book is a narrative poem, *Cora Fry* (Norton).

Pablo Picasso
by Pierre Cabanne

(Morrow; $19.95)

There are few good biographies of artists. The best are those like Vasari's *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors, and Architects* (1550 and 1568) or Roland Penrose's *Picasso, His Life and Work* (1958): matter of fact and brief, so as not to compete with what the artist was all about—the visual evidence of his work. Where the literary figure, the statesman, or the *bon vivant* is born into the world of words, whether written or spoken, the artist is often taciturn. His life is in his images; his words can be foolish or misleading, if occasionally perceptive. This is not to say that he is illiterate or verbally inept, but that his most profound communications are by images, whatever their nature: romantic or classical, representational or abstract, religious or secular, personal or universal.

The most successful near-biographies of artists are what the art historians call monographs. These deal primarily with the work of the artist and examine his life through verbal or literary remains as they cast illumination on his principal legacy. And, like biographies, they can be "standard" works but can always be suspended, or at least modified, by the differing attitudes and newly acquired knowledge of subsequent generations. A negative proof of the value of monographs (as opposed to biographies) at least in modern times, is to be found in the nature of the popular biographies of famous artists such as Michelangelo (Romain Rolland), Van Gogh (Irving Stone), or Leonardo (Dmitri Merejkowski) where one is really dealing with fiction, and all too often, bad fiction.

Picasso presents a particularly difficult problem for the would-be biographer. Few informed students of art would deny his place as at least one of the two or three great painters and sculptors of the 20th century. Only a few more would deny his total preeminence for the half century beginning in 1900. And this would be on the basis of not thousands but tens of thousands of works in oil, water color, ink, charcoal, steel, bronze, ceramics, and numerous print processes (Zervos's 31-volume catalog of Picasso's paintings and drawings through 1969 alone comprises 15,172 entries). Picasso thought and felt through an almost infinite number and variety of visual images. A large proportion of this kaleidoscope issuing from his mind and imagination found permanence in some medium—from the most impermanent napkins to materials as permanent as those of the near and distant past which formed the firm, if varied, foundations of his art. Mycenaean archaeology; Iberian remains; African tribal art; Greek vase painting; Hellenistic and Roman sculputre; Chinese ink paintings; the works of Cézanne, Velasquez, Delacroix, and Rembrandt; popular prints; Sardinian bronzes; and many other artists and traditions were grist for his mills. In these mills, powered by his mind and intuition, such foundations were *transformed*—not merely translated—into endlessly varied works of originality and profundity.

Not unsophisticated, Picasso knew very well what he did. He quite properly considered his works to be his message. Usually taciturn, when he did talk he could be ironic, sardonic, and sometimes untruthful. But his work was there to tell his truth, and woe be unto the listener who took him literally or always believed him! Stupid questions received apparently stupid or enigmatic answers. And how can one evaluate the intonation of the artist's voice when he speaks—ironically? jestingly? annoyingly? passionately? reflectively? As the philosophers and linguists can tell us, a spoken, double positive "Yeah! Yeah!" can indeed be a negative.

To write a good biography of Picasso one must be a rare being: master of several disciplines, subtle and flexible in thought, sensitive to nuance, and, above all, in command of the artist's principal legacy—his art. Unfortunately Pierre Cabanne fails on all these counts and many more, some of the most elementary nature.

The reproductions are gray and fuzzy, but at least they are not bad color. But these illustrations are only the merest prop to a singular text. The now-notorious book *The Great Collectors* by the same author (but a different publisher), merited the singular attention of a leading note in "The Talk of the Town" (*New Yorker*, March 7, 1964) as exemplifying the abdication of the fallible proofreader to the infallible computer. However, the machine in that case could not have been blamed for the implied designation of Jefferson as the capital of the United States. The habit has not altered, for comparable—almost unbelievable—errors of fact are sprinkled throughout *Pablo Picasso*. Page 185 names Raphael as the master of the *Last Judgment* in the Sistine Chapel (perhaps properly the *Sistine Madonna* now in Dresden?); page 267 describes Picasso's five "official wives beginning with the first one" (where fact confronts us with five *de facto* plus two legal ones); and on page 92 Picasso discovers Fernande Olivier drawing water from a "single faucet in the basement," while page 95 cites the master's discovery at a fountain in the center of a square in

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Montmartre. On page 176 Cubism has "passed its peak" at the end of 1915, but it "was not dead in 1920" on page 211, while on page 215 Cabanne writes "not so fast" about the death of that movement. Simple arithmetic is beyond the author: on page 15 Picasso's father is 26 in 1881, but on page 16 the old man dies at age 73 in 1913.

If some of the facts aren't right, the art criticism and art history are even worse. How can we trust an author who describes Picasso as being characteristically Spanish because of of his rejection of reality? Poor Velasquez, Ribera, and Goya! All those years spent studying facts, light, atmosphere, things as they are—and for nothing! Modernists will be enlightened to know (page 46) that Art Nouveau was "the actual first step of modern art." Descriptions are unreal. "Masks shaped as by scythe strokes with empty sockets. . . . " (page 113) is inflicted on the *Demoiselles d'Avignon* (Museum of Modern Art). Worst of all, on page 245 Greek sculpture is characterized as "archaic" until the 4th century BC!

Such errors of omission and commission are appalling enough but they are consistent with the chattering-cocktail-party-character of the book. Occasional footnotes appear, but they are merely a feint in the direction of accuracy, for there are more than occasional gossipy and startling disclosures with no source indicated. The journalistic, eyewitness, eavesdropping tone of the book permits no possibility of belief in the authenticity of the choice details—often proffered in passages of genuine purple prose. One oscillates from "Our ex-Cubist would often ask, 'What is Matisse up to?'" to "Spain always fed his art, picaresque, darkling Spain, festive, deathly Spain, with its songs, its walls, its moans of love or bloodshed."

I think it would be generally agreed that the later years of Matisse's life were more creative and produced more important works than those achieved by Picasso in his last years. But it could well be argued that Matisse's late, large-scale, and colorful cut-paper collages dominate mainly because of their scale and brilliant color. Picasso's late paintings exhibited at Avignon are indeed weaker, but the graphic works of his last years, although more intimate in scale and subject matter, are creative and numerous enough to constitute a major contribution to the art of the second half of this century. Cabanne fails to discuss problems such as these in any depth. Rather, he picks the easy and sensational way out, revelling in the eroticism and what he calls the pornography of these late graphic works.

Cabanne describes Picasso in his last years as a monstrous voyeur. But the artist has the last word on this subject: "Only when painting is not painting does it become an outrage against morality." Such strictures are applicable to this biography. I refer readers avid for a good biography of Picasso to Penrose, for the book reviewed here is unworthy of its subject in both form and content. Better still, they had best take lengthy and renewed looks at his work. Picasso himself in 1946 tells them how:

I paint the way some people write their autobiography. The paintings, finished or not, are the pages of my journal, and as such they are valid. The future will choose the pages it prefers. It's not up to me to make the choice. I have the impression that time is speeding on past me more and more rapidly. I'm like a river that rolls on, dragging with it the trees that grow too close to its banks or dead calves one might have thrown into it or any kind of microbes that develop in it. I carry all that along with me and go on.—F. Gilot and C. Lake, Life with Picasso *(New York, 1964), p. 123.*

Sherman E. Lee

Sherman E. Lee is director of the Cleveland Museum of Art.

Journals: Early Fifties Early Sixties
by Allen Ginsberg
edited by Gordon Ball

(Grove; $10)

The Beat Diary
edited by Arthur & Kit Knight

(Tuvoti Books; $10.95)

By the time he passed fifty, last year (June 3, 1976), Allen Ginsberg had securely entered the pantheon of American literature. He was no longer considered an *enfant terrible*; he was no longer a poet whose name could divide a literate audience, or even a university visitor capable of awakening the protectiveness of trustees. No, by 1976, Ginsberg had received almost all of the nation's literary prizes and had even been solemnly inducted into the National Institute of Arts & Letters—the American version of the French *Académie*. Today, it is generally agreed that he has been the most influential poet of his generation and surely one of the best as well, who has written one indisputable masterpiece, "Kaddish," and at least one poem, "Howl," whose lines resound in the head of every literate American under the age of 50.

Ginsberg has had unrivaled *influence*, in contrast to "power," which is the result of position and patronage; and the measures of his influence include not only how he contributed to the remarkably sharp change in American poetry, overthrowing the formal verse that was so predominant in the '50s, but also how he changed the appearance of "the poet" in America. Anyone today picking up the initial Hall-Pack-Simpson anthology, *New Poets of England and America* (1957), will be surprised to find kinds of poetry that scarcely exist today, and it is hard for us to remember now that most well-known poets two decades ago appeared clean-shaven. (*Clean-shaven*!) Some of this influence stems from Ginsberg's poetry, to be sure; but no appreciation of his singular achievement should neglect his talents as both a publicist and participant and his indefatigable competence as a poetry-performer and a letter-writer. Ginsberg made things happen, not only in the professional world immediate to him, but, as his stones fell into water, in increasingly wider circles around the world.

It was Ginsberg, more than anyone else, who made the "poetry reading" a popular cultural fashion all over the land, even though few can explode off the platform as successfully as he. It was Ginsberg, more than anyone else, who made homosexuality something that a

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celebrity could safely acknowledge in public. It was Ginsberg, more than any other "beat" poet, who performed the amazing literary-political feat of overturning the negative stereotype—the "Know-Nothing Bohemians," in Norman Podhoretz's phrase—that encased them 20 years ago. And it was Ginsberg, unlike anyone else, who persuaded younger poets to carry notebooks at all times, "accurately recording on the spot whatever was in the mind's eye," as Gordon Ball put it, and later mining those journals for finished poems. Writing itself became for Ginsberg the process of creation—of discovering the unknown, rather than refining what he already knew; for Ginsberg has been a poet not of invention but of expression, not of construction but of communication, constantly revealing his mind through language.

Now that he is securely in the pantheon, a secondary Ginsberg literature is beginning to appear. Most of it is written by others, ranging from friends to junior professors; much of it comes from Ginsberg himself. Grey Fox, a small press in Bolinas, California, issued a volume of his earliers poems, *The Gates of Wrath*, back in 1972, and Full Court, in New York, has more recently issued his earliest songs, *First Blues* (1976). McGraw-Hill published a collection of impressive intellectual improvisations, *Allen Verbatim* (1974) and then John Tytell's first-class critical study of Burroughs-Ginsberg-Kerouac, *Naked Angels* (1976). Creative Arts in Berkeley promises the Ginsberg-Neal Cassady correspondence, in the wake of the latter's widow's memoir of "Jack and Neal," *Heart Beat* (1976); and Penmaen Press in Lincoln, Massachusetts, just released a curious volume, *To Eberhart from Ginsberg*, which consists of a letter that Ginsberg wrote 20 years ago to the poet Richard Eberhart, who was then commissioned by the *New York Times* to "write a piece about what was happening on the West Coast." This book includes Eberhart's report, which seems embarrassingly tentative today, and Ginsberg's interesting preface, guilelessly entitled, "More Explanations Twenty Years Later."

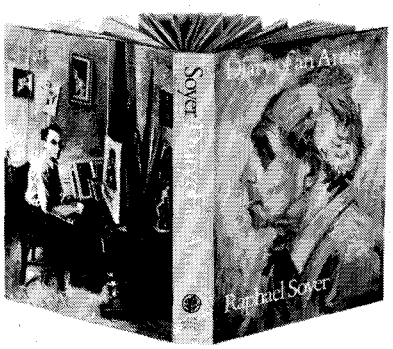
Gordon Ball, a North Carolina graduate student who had previously compiled *Allen Verbatim*, edited this new book, *Journals: Early Fifties Early Sixties*, from a stack of notebooks accumulated by Grove Press in 1967; and especially since Ginsberg's handwriting is so scratchy, Ball should first of all be commended for his loving labors. (One caveat: I wish he had at least estimated what percentage of the total notebooks are represented here.) What these *Journals* portray is the early progress of the man, from a private, insecure, self-conscious poet, learning from other poets and sampling mind-bending drugs, unsure of how he might economically survive, to a mature full-time professional in command of his personal powers and aware of his growing eminence. The book's final line, written February 11, 1962, is a testament to his self-realization: "I'm on a trip of my own."

In addition to some illuminating gossip (especially about Dylan Thomas, of all poets) and elaborate, somewhat interminable transcriptions of his dreams, *Journals* also contains uncollected poems, which is to say those first drafts that Ginsberg decided *not* to cull into publishable form. Since these are generally neither as intense nor as coherent as his canonized poems, Ginsberg's *Journals* first of all makes us aware not only of the procedures of Ginsberg's poetic imagination but also of his own self-editing functions. (Two poems worth preserving by themselves, in my judgment, are "Subliminal," a very angry poem from 1960, and "Snicker Snoop, " a marvelous sound poem co-authored with Jack Kerouac in 1961.)

The Beat Diary, edited by Arthur and Kit Knight, is another kind of secondary Ginsberg literature. A compendious paperback anthology, 8 1/2" by 11", it includes, in addition to selections from Ginsberg's *Journals*, interviews with Gregory Corso, William S. Burroughs, Philip Whalen, and Gary Snyder (who is especially perceptive), as well as new poems and prose by Michael McClure, Carl Solomon, Herbert Huncke and Lawrence Ferlinghetti, among others. The best parts, however, are first, the awesomely exuberant 1948-52 correspondence between Jack Kerouac and John Clellon Holmes and then the full-page photographs, nearly all of which are fresh to print. To each his own, I suppose, but my own favorite, almost at the end of the book, shows Ginsberg conversing earnestly with Diana Trilling on the right, while Lionel Trilling, on the left, stares forward apprehensively. *The Beat Diary* is the kind of sloppily produced, nonetheless invaluable book that typically comes not from commerical publishers but the nation's small presses.

Diary of an Artist
Raphael Soyer

"the dean of American realist painters" —JOHN CANADAY



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The self-portrait remains a partial one, however, for what *Journals* scarcely reveals is Ginsberg's competence as a literary politician, organizing his colleagues, overthrowing the negative stereotype, advising people of power, etc., either because he would prefer that such activities not be publicly divulged or, more likely, because he thinks them beneath the dignity of his *Journal*. Understanding of this dimension should not be lost, for one theme I get from Ann Charters' fine biography of *Jack Kerouac* (1973) is that Ginsberg survived, unlike Kerouac, in part because he knew how to conduct a literary careed in America.

Perhaps this dimension of the total picture should be left to yet another contributor to the secondary literature—Ginsberg's future biographer.

Richard Kostelanetz

Richard Kostelanetz is the author of *Literary Politics in America* (Sheed), recently issued in paperback.

The Duplications by Kenneth Koch

(Random House; $6.95, $3.95 paper)

The Book of the Body by Frank Bidart

(Farrar, Straus and Giroux; $7.95)

Houses and Travellers by W.S. Merwin

(Atheneum; $10, $6.95 paper)

Stanley Kunitz once wrote, "I am half-persuaded that the modern mind is too distracted for the span of attention demanded by the long poem . . ." I wonder what the modern reader will make of Kenneth Koch's 154 page epic *Duplications*, a poem in rhymed octets which demands the kind of concentration usually reserved for watching a juggler keep a dozen colored balls in the air at once.

Duplications attempts to encompass the universe, to "Make oppositions one, to bring Khartoum,/Venice, and Oz into the self-same urn; to/Put silverfoil and rags on the same loom/Along with silks and wool and mud, to weave/a fabric to deceive and undeceive . . ." Some of the specific subjects in its nearly endless list of vignettes include the death and resurrection of Donald Duck, The Early Girls whose lovemaking causes duplicate cities to appear, a handful of Greek Gods, a duplicate city of Venice in the Andes, constructed for the pleasure of one of the characters.

It is a tribute to Mr. Koch's marvelous wit, inventiveness, and technical brilliance that all this chaos somehow holds together, and of course the ordering of chaos is one of the purposes of the book.

Even if the reader is only intermittently interested in the various threads of story, it is almost impossible for him not to be hypnotized by the energy of the language, by the zany explanations and transitions, by the puns, parodies, and outrageous rhymes, by sheer, life-giving exuberance. I was particularly taken by Koch's wonderfully insane images of food which include a matzoh placard of enormous size used for civil defense. Mr. Koch is like the bees he describes who "dance to show, when entering the hive,/Which way best flowers are . . ."

Yet it is also a measure of the exhaustion this book can produce that I came to the short autobiographical section in the middle with something like relief. It was not a matter of flagging concentration but rather a longing for an ordinary, quiet, human place.

Though "ordinary" and "quiet" are not adjectives I would choose to describe Frank Bidart's work, "human" certainly is. In *The Book of the Body* Bidart also tackles the long poem, but here we move from the implications of duplication to those of amputation.

The six poems that make up this book are dramatic narratives which successfully combine various free and verse forms, assorted prose passages, and in one case even the villanelle. Mr. Bidart is concerned with "the unmappable mountain of FEELING" the problem of "wanting to cease to feel . . ." His characters are trying to come to terms with their pain and their losses and with "the stump-filled material world,—things; bodies;/CRAP—a world of accident and chance—;"

"Ellen West," the final poem in the book, describes a case of anorexia nervosa, that disease of self-hatred the women's movement might well use as a sort of symbolic raison d'etre. Among other things, this poem is also a wonderful refutation of the theory that a man can't successfully write in the persona of a woman. In fact Frank Bidart seems able to write with power and ease in any persona he chooses. His language is both spare and eloquent with contemporary surfaces and philosophical undertones. His is a fine new writer whom it will be interesting to watch.

In 1961 James Dickey wrote, "I think a new strange kind of simplicity is now becoming available to Merwin." It is the linking of "strange" with "simplicity" that is particularly apt when applied to Merwin's newest book. For it is the deceptive simplicity of the language that allows the reader to accept quite naturally the strange—even the fantastic.

Houses and Travellers is a collection of short prose pieces, a sequel, in its way, to his earlier *The Miner's Pale Children*. A few of these pieces are short enough to fall into that most controversial of categories, the prose poem; others are almost short stories. But the majority of these narratives fall somewhere in between and could roughly be called myths, parables, or fairy tales. They have for their antecedents not only Borges and Kafka but the folk tale, the conte, even the Bible. In fact there are many biblical echoes in the book, and we find among the fugitives, the peddlars, and the talking woodpeckers, a collection of fallen angels, preachers, and small black beetles "who are soldiers of Pharaoh."

"Everything has its story," Merwin tells us, and it is one of his special gifts that he is able to give equal weight to the story of a man who was able to get hold of all the laughter in the world and to that of a stone which, like Charles Simic's "Stone," has a moon rising

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within it. It is almost as if the people and the objects that have gradually been disappearing from Merwin's poetry have reappeared here in his prose.

"The Nest" is the opening narrative, and it can stand as an emblem for all that is to follow. "A pair of pigeons once discovered an open umbrella hanging by its handle from a beam in an empty shed where a shepherd had left it. It was spring. They built their nest in the black web." Later the pigeons have offspring who learn to fly, leave the nest and make out quite well until it rains. "Between them and their home a dozen umbrellas opened. Suddenly it seemed to them that they were flying upside down . . . They tried to fly on their backs, but they were dashed against the earth, where they were caught and eaten by the animals . . ." The story ends with the parent birds rather pompously and sadly misinterpreting the disappearance of their young and congratulating themselves upon their unique nest. But irony here is only secondary. More to the point is the dangerous misunderstanding of the world and its objects, a misunderstanding that occurs over and over in the book and which makes central the metaphor of sight. Not since Oedipus have I encountered such a litany of eyes: so much blindness and darkness, so many shadows, disappearances, lost travellers.

On the other hand, each of these small tales is in itself an illumination, is itself visionary. Even the language is luminous; it is poetic prose in the best sense of the phrase.

There will still be readers who miss the earlier Merwin, the Merwin of "The Judgement Of Paris." There are still those who are angry with Picasso for leaving his blue period. But Merwin too has enormous range and power and an astonishing capacity for change. James Dickey was quite accurate in 1961 when he predicted that "Merwin should soar like a phoenix out of the neat ashes of his early work."

Linda Pastan

Linda Pastan's new book of poems, *The Five Stages of Grief* will be published by Norton in February.

Cavafy: A Biography
by Robert Liddell

(Schocken Books; $8.95)

Alexandria Still: Forster, Durrell, and Cavafy
by Jane Lagoudis Pinchin

(Princeton University Press; $13.50)

Robert Liddell has made a passion of Cavafy, a near-obsession of his life and work. Before starting work on this *Biography*, he wrote a fictionalized version of Cavafy's life, *Unreal City* (Cavafy was Durrell's model for the "old poet" in *The Alexandria Quartet*), lived in Alexandria for many years and befriended the many friends of Cavafy still living. Since the poet himself only died in 1933, Liddell's problem was not others' scholarship—Cavafy is not much-tilled ground—but rather to uncover, verify, order and get the record straight. He has done this admirably, interviewing people whose memories of Cavafy are no less partisan for not being fresh.

Liddell's book is early archeology for American readers, an initial presentation by one who understands well the shortcomings of biography of near-contemporary figures. So Liddell opens his books with an apology, citing Seferis's warning: "outside his work, Cavafy does not exist." Cavafy's private life was carefully sheltered, and the illuminating facts—beyond the poems—are few, and often debated. Liddell had to move carefully between two dangers: to avoid writing a hagiography of one he admired, and to avoid self-assurance when the track is truly lost. Liddell himself says that a book on Cavafy, in English, without Greek citations, "can only pretend to biographical definitiveness"; it is a measure of Liddell's contribution that Keeley's recent study (*Cavafy's Alexandria: Study of a Myth in Progress*), much welcomed by modest Liddell, is, in fact, full of references and of theories from Liddell made fact, notions and intuitions researched into a reasonable certainty by this biography without Greek citations.

The Cavafy family's pride of exaggerated aristocratic ancestry, their impoverishment and fight to maintain standing in a small and gossiping Greek community in Egyptian Alexandria, a city without glory since Alexander's time, then maintained by a reluctant British garrison—all this background is ably drawn in Liddell's book. Most interestingly, we see the daily life of the poet, his nocturnal wanderings of the city he made a metaphor for ancient Hellenism, and his own erotic fantasies and memories. Liddell explains Cavafy's choice of a secure and modest position at the Municipal Water Board, leaving him free afternoons. Liddell walks us through Cavafy's library, the collection of "one not so much erudite as well read," as one memoir put it. Angry annotations to the priggish Ruskin; a silent dialogue in the margins of Gibbon; ideas and names culled; Selucid kings and defeated generals from Asia Minor; incidents from Rome's decline and decadence that gave Cavafy the settings for exquisite lyrics that move the reader back into times made familiar by the narrator's modern voice. Liddell passes on the story that the dying poet, from his hospital bed, asked a friend to visit the local library to check a reference for his last poem. By the time we come to this, the detail is not only poignant, but utterly credible.

Cavafy's mania to be written about makes him human, as do stories about how the old gentleman wrote the speeches to be given about his work at the local academy, read by others as their own; and how he financed and controlled a local literary magazine to print his verse and cast just the right critical angle on it, careful never to see a *Complete Poems* issued in his lifetime. We see Cavafy walking the streets of an ever-dirtier, changed Alexandria, pondering the next installment of broadsides for a select few, the exclusive way his work was known in his lifetime, save for Forster's entreaties for more poems to recommend to London publishers Chatto and Windus.

Cavafy's homosexuality is now making him something of a cult figure; his books, and Liddell's, are featured in gay bookstores coast to coast. It seems not enough to be a great poet, and certainly not enough to be a major modern Greek

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poet. He will be famous because his is one of the most tender voices of 20th century homosexual literature, and so be it: bearing a confining label for handy recall is the price Cavafy pays to avoid utter obscurity in all but a small circle.

Liddell handles the sexual aspect of Cavafy's life and work beautifully, explaining Cavafy's original secrecy and his changed attitudes with age, never flinching from telling details like Cavafy's preference for three particular boys, Spyro, George and Toto, a motor mechanic, whom he met at the Cafe Al Salam in the rue Missala. "He used to take them to his house, and he tipped them; they told Mr. Malanos (whose informant is Liddell's third hand source) and his friends that this was merely out of kindness, but they hardly expected to be believed, and they were not."

Liddell also refrains from making judgments in the International Ranking-the-Poets Fame List. But he aptly cites Eliot's judgment that a lifework which consists of a number of shorter poems "even of poems which, taken individually, may appear rather slight" can establish a poet as "major" when taken as a whole. This is Liddell's opinion of Cavafy; "why he is great." The biographer likens the Cavafy canon to "a small, beautifully arranged museum, where everything tells" which may be more satisfying than "a slipshod collection that (in fact) contains one or two superior works of art."

Jane Lagoudis Pinchin hit on a perfectly clear and neat idea. What could be better than to revisit Cavafy's Alexandria and write a dense essay about three major writers and their shared basis in that place? With Liddell's book and Edmund Keeley's study out in print, and several Cavafy translations, the stage is now set for "secondary" studies. After all, even though Alexandria is now just another shabby, provincial Arab city, it was, as the author of this book calls it "Cavafy's capital of memory." A close reading of his poetry of place provides the leaping-off point for discussing Forster and Durrell and how they reacted to Alexandria and its chief poet. Cavafy is a character in the background of Forster's voice, and makes a major cameo appearance as Balthazar ("His pale face with its gleaming goat-eyes") in the *Alexandria Quartet*. Cavafy wrote "Mohammed Aly Square is my aunt, the rue Cherif Pacha is my first cousin and the rue di Ramleh my second. How can I leave them?" It is as though the music of Alexandria, which haunts Antony in one of Cavafy's most famous poems, piped the tune for Forster and Durrell.

One would have thought Pinchin would concentrate simply on the city of Alexandria in the works of the three writers, a straightforward enough task. She does do this and nicely, researching a thread connecting mutual influences, exchanged letters and reported conversations on a trail stretching from the street in Alexandria where Cavafy's home is now the Pension Amir, through King's College and to Austin. But she manages much more, rendering—without beating to death—the spiritual kinship between Cavafy and Forster, one based in their shared homosexuality and sensibility. Much to her credit, she never falls into the trap of assuming "a homosexual sensibility." She documents "a delicate irony" as the bridge between them and on that crucial structure, present and yet elusive, she builds a thoroughly footnoted essay on Forster's Alexandrian years. Rather like Cavafy, in fact, she starts with the simple insight of several writers' shared interest in a faded city and works from there in ever-expanding circles of literary history drawing on an immense range of sources to render vivid the place of Alexandria, a city which, like Edo or Ur, has risen in its decline from just another urban center to a metaphor.

The author is less interested, and less interesting, when it comes to Durrell, and seems overly concerned with defending his reputation, which she calls subject to "strangely hateful criticism." In fact, italicizing the verb in "his talent *is* a large one . . . " seems unnecessary; the reader is already willing to grant that Durrell should share space here with Forster and Cavafy. More annoying than a picayune tracing of Cavafy citations in the *Quartet* is the author's willingness to stop and pick fights with forgotten reviewers from the *Times Literary Supplement*. Haggling with Lionel Trilling's appraisal of Forster's historical essays may be the stuff of doctoral dissertations in comparative literature, but here it only slows down her story for the benefit of a very few.

Nonetheless, in hardly over 200 pages, she succeeds in recounting the story of Cavafy and his English translators; writes impassioned critical essays on her subjects; and with all the trappings of scholarship, produces an excellent piece of writing.

Barth David Schwartz

Barth David Schwartz is at work on a critical biography of Pier Paolo Pasolini.

Brief Reviews

The Shrine and Other Stories by Mary Lavin

(Houghton Mifflin; $6.95)

This small volume's green dust jacket with its misty photograph of Glendalough is misleading; these are Irish stories, but not of leprechauns. Mary Lavin's Ireland is contemporary, a place struggling with the clashing elements of tradition and development. In the title story an old priest lives with a deception about a shrine. He publishes an overblown pamphlet about the Virgin's apparition in an attempt to bring more pilgrims (and revenue) to his parish, but rejects his niece's fiancé because of the young man's dreamy scheme about possible geologic and mineral development of the area—also to bring in more revenue. The dust jacket tells us that these are "simple people," but they're not. Their lives reveal the intricacies of living in a country in which both new and old ways apply.

In "A Mug of Cold Water" a young

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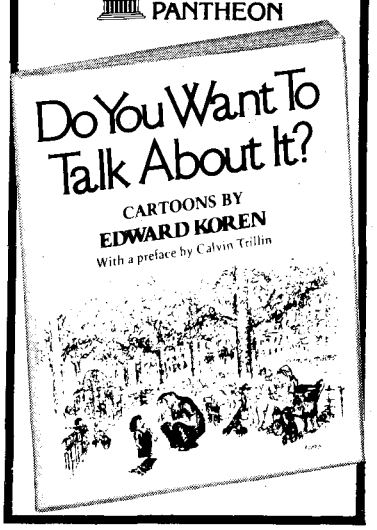

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English bride named Esmay spends her honeymoon crawling in and out of passage graves with her pedantic and overly enthusiastic husband. Not much happens, but through Esmay's experience of the tombs, and her imaginative grasp of the people who built them, we come to know something about the spell of ancient things. Esmay's developing understanding of her husband, the realization that her imagination exceeds his grasp of the tombs' archeological facts, her acceptance of the limitation of his vision, are subtly rendered. Mary Lavin observes with something of Joyce's "scrupulous meanness," never going beyond the necessary detail. These stories are clearly seen, not romanticized. And they hint that on a second reading they will reveal even more.

Keeping the Night by Peter Everwine

(Atheneum; $3.95)

Peter Everwine divides this, his second book of poems, into three untitled sections. The first poems are deceptively simple, short lined and spare. They speak of everyday objects: *"But here is my room, my clothes/on the chair,/open book and table—all my possessions/gathered like relatives."* The second section is a cycle of poems about Italy, some written from the point of view of a returning native, some with the voice of an Italian woman coming to America to marry a man she doesn't know: *"There, in the dress she's worn for days/with no blessings and no flowers/she marries him."* In the last section, addressed to a woman, the poems explore the different threads that bind him to the world, the woman, his past. Everwine sets up a progression through the sections that works to teach the reader how to understand his book. This sounds a bit pat and contrived, but the poems are strong enough to bear it.

In A Dark Wood by Marina Warner

(Knopf; $8.95)

Marina Warner's previous books—*The Dragon Empress: The Life and Times of Tz'u-hsi* and *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary*—must have provided her with an enormous amount of Chinese and Christian esoterica. Much of it appears in this novel, along with the CIA, silversmithing, the world of London book reviewers, a Vietnam version of *South Pacific* (Phu Quoc Isle instead of Bali Hai), and a vaguely homosexual relationship between a Jesuit and a musical historian called Oliver. There's also Sicily, an unfounded appearance of the Virgin Mary, a Chinese antique dealer named Wang, and a woman named Francesca who's called Froggy. In spite of all this, and in spite of the author's predilection for sentences like: "Jerome Namier rose as the first anorexic light of day began to seep out of the edges of the swollen clouds," this is a readable book. In fact, the novel's chapters in which Warner recreates the imperial court of 17th century Peking are wonderful. I wished for more of them.

Catherine O'Neill

Correspondence, *from page 7*

Rewarding a scofflaw

To the editors:

TRB's recent column ("The Recidivist," *TNR*, Sept. 17) highlights the failure of the outmoded National Labor Relations Act to protect working people from unscrupulous employers such as the J.P. Stevens Company.

The framers of this landmark labor law, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Frances Perkins, FDR's Secretary of Labor, and Senator Robert Wagner would be aghast if they knew that 42 years later their stirring legislative achievement had been twisted into a sanctuary for industrial outlaws instead of serving as a safeguard for employees.

As disturbing as the "human rights" violations cited by TRB is the fact that the Federal Government subsidizes J.P. Stevens, having awarded America's number one labor law violator $16 million of taxpayers' money in textile contracts in 1975. In a *Catch-22* contradiction, the US Government thus simultaneously fines and rewards a business scofflaw that has been cited 18 times for breaking the law.

One assumes that if the J.P. Stevens Company has a coat-of-arms it must read "It pays to break the law."

Lou Gerber
Communications Workers of America

TRB, *from page 2*

I remember the creepy-crawly testimony Central Intelligence Director Allen Dulles (brother of Foster) gave us way back in November 1959, when he told Congress that Soviet industrial growth was leaping ahead at eight or nine percent a year. It was in the midst, I think, of Eisenhower's fourth recession in eight years, when our own annual growth rate was minus 1.2 percent. If this disparity continued, Dulles worried, "the gap between our two economies by 1970 will be dangerously narrowed."

Two years later, ebullient, roly-poly Khrushchev told the Moscow party congress that well before 1980 the Soviet Union would have "a standard of living higher than that of any capitalist country." They would bury us. Oh well, it didn't happen. We still have the American luxury of maintaining seven to eight million unemployed and a fifth of our plant capacity unutilized, while the unfortunate Russians must strain to get work from every citizen and machine. We can be complacent, can't we; if the US has an energy crisis it can always give up its cars but the Russians have no cars to give up.

Unfortunately, arms races are not fought by comparisons of Gross National Products. In this world the A-bomb is the great equalizer. Yet the evidence now produced by the CIA indicates persuasively that we have reached a juncture. The world's second largest economy has got serious bottlenecks and will apparently get a lot more very shortly.

The Soviets have reason, as never before, to consider an accommodation. It strengthens our bargaining position. It is a high card. Can we play it wisely? I agree with wise old Averell Harriman who repeated here recently his firm conviction: stay alert, keep defenses up, but do not despair that the Russians are implacable and immovable; explore every avenue of understanding including trade. Yes, trade that helps them raise productivity and living standards. What price in reduced tension will they pay for technology?

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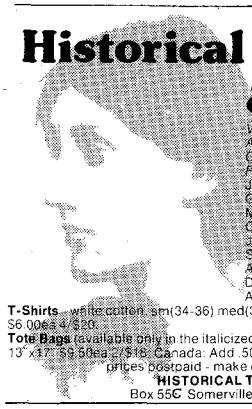

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Washington Diarist

Old Causes and New

A former student of mine, circa 1962—*then a college junior, now second man in* one of our Eastern European embassies—visited Harvard recently. He reminisced with me that after our first meeting he returned to his room and informed a roommate that his tutor was a crank. "You told me then," he recalled "that those troops John Kennedy had sent into Vietnam, a place of which I'd scarcely heard, would be only the first of hundreds of thousands, even millions, of Americans who would end up fighting an unjust war. How we laughed at your intensity and pessimism." At that point, as my student and friend knew, I was active in the local peace movement, hardly a very fashionable enterprise in a town where many boasted, and some had, a direct line to Mac, to little Arthur, to McNaughton, to McNamara, to the President himself. We were not, generally speaking, very ideological. Our goals, though not modest, certainly were limited: to get America extricated from what David Halberstam would soon have much of "enlightened opinion" perceiving as a quagmire. We thought America's war there not a mistake, but an enormity. But we also had few illusions, those early few of us, about Hanoi's intervention. We failed, and as the peace movement grew, it fell into the hands of a leadership that was much more ideological—I thought more dishonest. By 1968 or early 1969 it was a cohort with which I found myself in less and less sympathy.

Last week another tutee, class of 1977, came to say good-bye, off for a year of study abroad. He'd spent the previous evening in a theater on New York's Upper West Side, at an event to welcome the UN delegation of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. "Curiosity," he explained, as if you have to go to the desert to know that it's dry. How could one not have been glad when our troops pulled out and the large-scale fighting ceased? But I felt no joy in the Communist triumph. The cruel ideological police of the north now rule the southern provinces. Even the National Liberation Front has disappeared without a trace, leaving not even the meanest consolation for those Americans who marched with its slogans. Why give a party for the Vietnamese government? Why embrace its emissaries? And why treat its spokesmen as virtuous men? Andy Young's rhetoric at the General Assembly has not convinced me that the appearance of this delegation of yet another dictatorship on the East River is a fulfillment of Martin Luther King's dream. The Vietnamese presence is *realpolitik*, which is how international agencies do their work, so their presence is necessary and, in that limited sense, good. But there's nothing more to be said for it. In fact, there is neither more nor less than what might be said about the presence of Chile. Nevertheless, the two thousand celebrants let loose their secular hosannas whenever the armed doctrine of Hanoi was praised and our own government excoriated. A Puerto Rican liberation group was introduced and told, to tumultuous applause, that it too would soon take its "rightful" place at the United Nations; lesbian songs were sung and more conventional hortatory poems recited, including one by Muriel Rukeyser called "Flying to Hanoi," no doubt evoking memories of earlier migrations by similar birds. Pete Seeger did one of his mini-hootenannies. A good time was had by all, including some public officials.

The official brochure of this last-gasp pep rally of the anti-war movement's left flank characterizes the government of unified Vietnam as "democratic. A new constitution for the reunified country has been written and will soon be ratified. . . . [The] people of Vietnam are active in government through the National Assembly . . . [and] through the many mass organizations for women, workers, teachers, artists, youth, students, etc." How nice. But this is the agitprop of totalitarianism. Which makes me wonder why genuine democrats associate themselves with it. Simone Weil wrote, "One must always be ready to change sides with justice, that fugitive from the winning camp." Surely justice does not now reside with the winning camp in Vietnam. There is an old Yiddish saying about people who want to dance at all the weddings.

A retrospective of Raphael Soyer's drawings and watercolors is at Washington's National Collection of Fine Arts. I went with two friends, one a government official dealing with numbers who, like me, was moved by a show of a contemporary master whose devotion is mostly to the human face and form and to the emotions they evoke. The other, a printmaker herself, cautioned us not to think of Soyer as old-fashioned and pointed out elements of daring and modernity which cannot be found in works by famous artists whose names cry out TODAY. There is one watercolor I'd never seen before. It's a self-portrait done on November 22, 1963. President Kennedy's assassination has been variously marked in art, most notably by Robert Rauschenberg's famous collage and Ben Shahn's illustrations to Wendell Berry's poem about the funeral. These are moving commemorations. But in catching his own beautiful and stunned face, Soyer seized the one moment in our time when all of us were together and which none of us will forget. It is more of a tribute to what Kennedy meant for Americans than any painting of him I've ever seen.

A new cause—"paedophilia," it's called—is trying to establish itself in England and elsewhere. The goal of the movement is abolition of the age of consent as a constraint on sexual relations between adults and children. It's not going to be an easy battle. Most people are likely to see paedophilia not as an expression of mutual love between adults and children, but as an occasion for manipulating, maneuvering, coaxing, persuading, bribing the youth into activities to which they are simply by age incapable of giving free and full consent. The English paedophiliac journal *Palaver* says the biggest push for the cause in Europe comes from reform-minded clerics, always eager to be way out in front on just about everything. The Dutch are great enthusiasts for breaking taboos, and a parliamentary commission has recommended breaking this one—surely not very far from the last. Saul Bellow's Artur Sammler sits in his Upper West Side apartment reflecting. "He saw the increasing triumph of Enlightenment—Liberty, Fraternity, Equality, Adultery . . . the rights of women, the rights of children, the rights of criminals . . the privileges of aristocracy (without any duties) spread wide, democratized, especially the libidinous privileges, the right to be uninhibited, spontaneous, urinating, defecating, belching, coupling in all positions, tripling, quadrupling, polymorphous, noble in being natural, primitive, combining the leisure and luxurious inventiveness of Versailles with the hibiscus-covered erotic ease of Samoa."

M. P.

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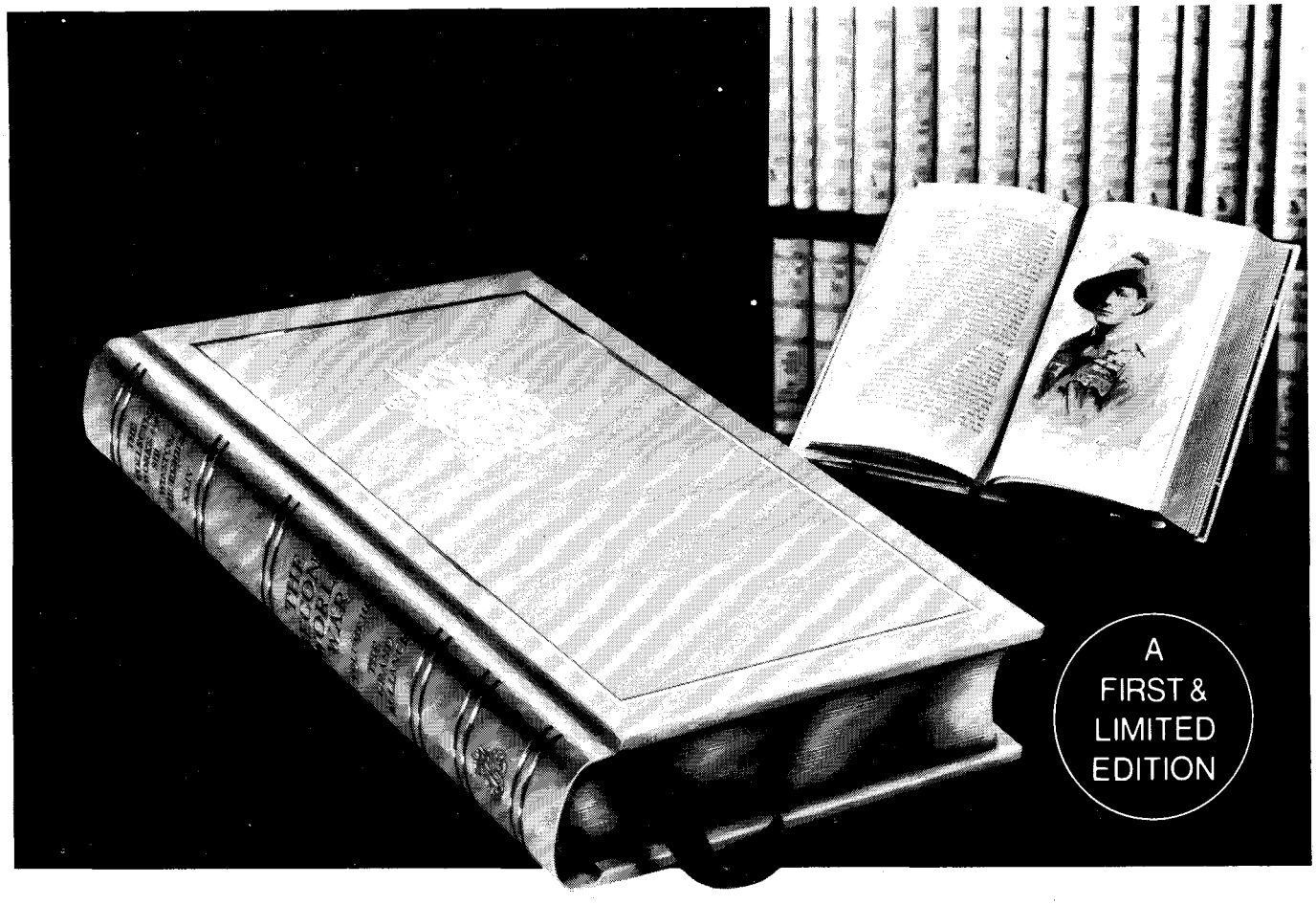

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Very simply, these are our objectives . . . because we are working in the interests of rural America—of all America.

OCT 17 1977

America's rural electric systems

For more information on rural electric energy positions, write Dept R, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, 2000 Florida Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

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